DOOM 3 WORLD-EXCLUSIVE FIRST REVIEW
PC GAMER
THE WORLD'S BEST-S PC GAMES E
SEPTEMBER 2004
VOLUME 11
NUMBER 9
EXCLUSIVE PLAYTESTS
BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH
CALL OF DUTY: UNITED OFFENSIVE
EVERY DETAIL
KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC II
COLLECT BOTH COVERS!
PC GAMER
THE WORLD-EXCLUSIVE
FIRST REVIEW
DOOM 3
Get your PC Doom 3-ready with our in-depth tech guide
future games
The first choice for gamers
CD-ROM EDITION

PAIN
SUFFERING
DEATH.

"A MASTERPIECE OF THE ART FORM"
-PC GAMER

IT'S COMING

G FOR YOU
WWW.DOOM3.COM
Developed By
idSoftware.com
Distributed By
ACTIVISION
MATURE 17+
Blood and Gore
Intense Violence
ESRB
©2004 Id Software, Inc. All rights reserved.

Contents

PC GAMER

THE WORLD'S BEST-SELLING PC GAMES MAGAZINE

34

THE WORLD'S FIRST REVIEW

DOOM 3

FEATURES

EXCLUSIVE!

34
DOOM 3: FIRST-EVER REVIEW

No, you're not dreaming — id's long-awaited *Doom 3* is finally here. And we were the first people on the planet to play it from its beginning to its trauma-inducing finale. A review so huge, so frightening, so revelatory, only *PC Gamer* could deliver it! Why haven't you turned the page yet?

FEATURES

46
ULTIMATE SIMULATIONS

Sim fans, rejoice! We have exclusive details and screenshots for a multitude of delicious-looking games, including *Pacific Fighters* and *Dangerous Waters*. And, as a special bonus, we offer the world-exclusive hands-on of *Silent Hunter III*, the latest entry in the acclaimed submarine series.

SCOOPS

52
PCG SPOTLIGHT: KOTOR II

We were granted top-secret access to *Knights of the Old Republic II: The Sith Lords*, the explosive sequel to our 2003 Game of the Year. Read on for the full details about the series' new developer, the game's new Force powers, and the new worlds you'll visit.

SCOOPS

14
HANDS-ON PLAYTESTS

Two of the biggest games of the year, *Battle for Middle-Earth* and *Call of Duty: United Offensive*, are nearing completion, and we've got exclusive hands-on reports for both. We also try out *Armies of Exigo*, *Kohan II*, *Leisure Suit Larry*, *Dungeon Lords*, and *Postal 2: Apocalypse Weekend*.

ON THE CD

This month's CD is packed with the ultimate in gaming! You'll find two demos for *Ground Control II* (single- and multi-player), plus the revered *Alien Swarm* mod for *Unreal Tournament 2004*, along with five Reflexive mini-games!

6 LETTERS

12 SCOOPS
Chuck braved the wilds of Quebec to get this inside report on *Myst IV: Revelation*, the groundbreaking new installment in the hugely popular *Myst* series. The great news is that the game should appeal to both old and new fans.

30 EYEWITNESS
We have all the details on The History Channel's new series *Decisive Battles*, which uses the *Rome: Total War* engine to re-create great battles of yore. Plus, we playtest Comcast's new Games on Demand service, and we have the dirt on *Making History*, a full-featured strategy game designed as an educational tool.

76 HARD STUFF
Greg sits down with id's brain trust to get the inside word on what kind of hardware you'll need to get the most out of *Doom 3*. Plus, he reviews Robosapien, the new N-Gage QD, and Allenware's DHD Media Center, and delivers a mind-expanding Q&A!

90 EXTENDED PLAY
The new *Alien Swarm* mod for *UT 2004* has Dan yelling *Aliens* lines fast and furiously. See how this epic creation takes the game to whole new levels of intensity.

94 KILLING BOX

94 DESKTOP GENERAL

96 ALTERNATE LIVES

96 SIM COLUMN

98 STRATEGY
EXCLUSIVE! A massive *City of Heroes* update is coming, and only we have the essential info that'll help you master the new, higher-level foes and areas.

104 BACKSPACE

Letter from the Editor

"STOP YOUR GRINNIN' AND DROP YOUR LINEN"

Welcome to *A Very Special Episode of PC Gamer*.

The greatest (of many) moments in editing this magazine are when we get to break the industry's biggest stories. And it's hard to think of anything bigger than this month's cover story — the world-exclusive first review of *Doom 3*.

id Software is arguably the most influential developer in the history of PC gaming, and no id game has been as eagerly awaited as *Doom 3*. In typical fashion, the id guys have kept a tight seal on their official pronouncements — there hasn't even been a single hands-on preview anywhere. Well, in our typical fashion, we were able to hook up with id to play the game from start to finish — twice through, in fact — just as it went gold. Our magazine's lead time matched the two-month lag for duplication and distribution of the game, meaning that this issue should be in your hands almost synchronously with the release of the game on store shelves.

Doom 3 couldn't have come at a better time, either. It delivers the best gaming experience, bar none, of 2004, and demonstrates in no uncertain terms what the PC platform can achieve. Along with the new NVIDIA and ATI graphics cards to run it at optimal level, *Doom 3* is going to hit the gaming scene like an atom bomb. We're proud to be able to give you a six-page review.

But we've got a lot more this month. We present the first hands-on playtest of *Call of Duty: United Offensive*, so you can get a feel for the massive expansion to Activision's acclaimed World War II shooter. Also, we sent Sim Columnist Andy Mahood on a world tour of the latest simulation showcases, and he returned with a definitive guide to the hottest titles on the radar.

Okay, that's enough jibba-jabba. Time for y'all to dig in. If you can identify the movie quoted above, send an email to *letters@pcgamer.com* and you might be the randomly chosen winner who snags a free game. (If you have a cell phone, you can text-message your entry to the number 76278 — in your message, type the word "PCG," then the movie title.)

Enjoy!

Dan Morris, Editor-in-Chief

REVIEWS

60	Alias
66	Besieger
61	Blitzkrieg: Burning Horizon
61	Chicago 1930
63	Everest
64	Ground Control II
58	Joint Operations
70	Room Zoom
68	Singles
72	Soldiers: Heroes of WWII
62	The Suffering
70	TrackMania

PC Gamer (ISSN-1080-4471) is published 13 times a year by Future Network USA, 150 North Hill Dr., Suite 10, Brisbane, CA 94005. Periodicals Class postage paid at Brisbane, CA, and additional mailing offices. Newsstand distribution is handled by the Curtis Circulation Company. Subscriptions: One year basic rate Q2 rate: U.S. $29.95; Canada: $49.95; Foreign: $69.95. Canadian price includes postage and GST #121139660RT. Outside U.S. and Canada: add $2.00 per issue. For customer service, write *PC Gamer* Customer Service, PO. Box 5958, Harlan, IA 51593-1608, or call (800) 898-7159 in the U.S., (415) 468-2500 outside the U.S. Postmaster please send change of address to *PC Gamer*, P.O. Box 5958, Harlan, IA 51593-0658 Corporate, advertising sales, circulation, editorial and production offices 150 North Hill Dr., Brisbane, CA 94005. Phone: (415) 468-4684. Fax: (415) 468-4686. Editorial information should be addressed to *Editor, PC Gamer*, 150 North Hill Dr., Brisbane, CA 94005. Overnight delivery parcels should be addressed to *PC Gamer*, 150 North Hill Dr., Brisbane, CA 94005. Unsolicited manuscripts cannot be returned or acknowledged. Future Network USA also publishes *Maximum PC*, *Macaddict*, *Official Xbox Magazine*, and *PlayStation Magazine*. Entire contents copyright 2004 Future Network USA. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without permission is prohibited. Reproduction on the Internet of the articles and features in this magazine is illegal without the prior written consent of *PC Gamer*. *Game Players*, *Game Players Guide*, and *Game Players Encyclopedia* are trademarks of Future Network USA. Products named in these pages are trademarks or trademarks of their respective companies. Future Network USA is not affiliated with the companies or products covered in *PC Gamer*. IPMA: 0178118. Produced in U.S.A. Note-along Enclosure in the following edition(s): CI, 01, 02, 03, 04. Publications Mail Agreement #40045630 Returns: 4960-2 Walker Road, Windsor, ON N9A 6J3

FOLLOW YOUR DREAMS.

For your chance to INSTANTLY WIN THOUSANDS OF PRIZES visit everquest2.com/riches!

T TEEN
Suggestive Themes
Violence
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org
Game Experience May Change During Online Play

SOE
SONY ONLINE ENTERTAINMENT

The way it's meant to be played
NVIDIA

www.everquest2.com

NO PURCHASE OR SUBSCRIPTION NECESSARY. MUST BE A LEGAL U.S. RESIDENT AT LEAST 13 YEARS OF AGE TO ENTER. VOID IN PUERTO RICO AND WHERE PROHIBITED. MANY WILL ENTER, FEW WILL WIN. Promotion ends 9/30/06. For Official Rules, prize descriptions, complete odds disclosure, and to enter go to www.everquest2.com/riches. Sponsor: Sony Online Entertainment, 8928 Terman Court, San Diego, CA 92121. © 2004 Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. EverQuest is a registered trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. SOE and the SOE logo are registered trademarks of Sony Online Entertainment Inc. All rights reserved. All other trademarks or trade names are properties of their respective owners. The NVIDIA logo and the "The way it's meant to be played" logo are registered trademarks or trademarks of NVIDIA Corporation. "Where Adventure Comes Alive" is a trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. The software platform logo (TM and © IEMA 2004.

CONQUER YOUR NIGHTMARES.

Behold the future of online gaming: the rich, inviting world of EverQuest™ II. Millions have experienced the legend, now it's time for you to join the quest. Choose your side, sharpen your weapons, practice your magic, and embark on a journey filled with majestic landscapes, bustling cities, ancient dungeons — and adventure beyond your dreams.

COMING SOON

EVERQUEST II

WHERE ADVENTURE COMES ALIVE™

THE MASSES SPEAK

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU! Email us at *letters@pcgamer.com*, or, if you're an old-fashioned sort, write to us at PC Gamer Letters, Future Network USA, 150 North Hill Dr., Ste. 40, Brisbane, CA 94005. Send in your mail, and let the masses be heard!

The troops of *Ghost Recon 2* take fire from enemies — and from our preview.

IF IT AIN'T BROKE...

No, no, this can't be! In the same day that I discover that the *Indiana Jones* movie sequel is probably totally and completely dead, I learn from your July 2004 issue that *Ghost Recon 2* is going to be missing the very things that made the original so great! What's a *Ghost Recon* game without being able to switch between each of your operatives? Answer: It's like an *Indiana Jones* sequel without Harrison Ford, directed by Vin Diesel, and co-starring the Stay Puft Marshmallow Man and his tricked-out, flame-farting Honda. Count me out!

— ISRAEL GROVEMAN

As I've grown older, I've become critical of game previews because they're usually so glowing and positive. Too often, they fail to point out problems — even when those problems are core design elements that aren't likely to change in later versions.

Prior to receiving your July 2004 issue, I'd already read several online E3 previews saying that *Ghost Recon 2* was going to be a third-person action game rather than a shooter, and I was already turned off by the idea. I was expecting your preview to be full of glowing adjectives and high hopes. Thank you for proving me wrong! You provided a *very* balanced preview; you called-out the game's highlights and told us what the developers are trying to do, but you also identified major design issues and changes in philosophy.

Great job, guys! Consider my subscription renewed.

— CHRIS JOHNSON

I really appreciated your honest take on the "sequel" to *Ghost Recon*. I can't believe that Red Storm is betraying their tactical roots just to sell a few extra copies.

I have purchased every military sim from Red Storm since *Rogue Spear* and had been planning to purchase *Ghost Recon 2* on day one, but now I guess I'll have to wait for the demo.

Man, I hope the higher-ups at Ubisoft read your article. Maybe they'll have a change of heart and decide to give their fans a true sequel.

— DUANE RICHARDS

AND IF IT *IS* BROKE...

I think it's time that games start being published on DVDs instead of CDs. *Far Cry* came out on six CDs, and according to your July 2004 *EverQuest II* story, that game is expected to ship on 10! For crying out loud, if you don't have a DVD-ROM drive, folks, go online and buy one for $20 so that game companies can start shipping their games on fewer discs!

— RICHARD G.

***No argument there, Richard. With new games coming out on so many CDs, an industry-wide switch to the larger format is well worth encouraging. The good news is that game companies are starting to come around, and, as we noted last issue, even Sony is rumored to be planning a DVD-ROM version of* EverQuest II.**

Over the long-term, DVD is the only way for the industry to go. It won't be a moment too soon.

Dead Man's Hand is simple, shotgunnin' fun for all ages.

WILD WILD WEST

Thanks so much for your excellent review of *Dead Man's Hand*. Having not seen any previews of it, I figured it must be pretty bad. Then I got your July 2004 issue, saw that you'd given it a solid 75%, and decided to take a chance. I'm so glad I did. While I agree with your criticisms, *DMH* is a steal for $20 — especially if, like me, you're an old man who's a fan of the Old West!

— BILL SCHULDINER

Age is a state of mind, Bill. Sounds to us like you're plenty youthful on the inside. Glad we were able to help point you in the right direction!

TALK ABOUT... GAMES THAT CHANGED YOU

THE ULTIMA SERIES: These were the first games I played that encouraged me to follow a virtuous path. It's ironic that the thing I needed most in my real life was given to me by a game, but I find that I'm a better person today because of what Richard Garriott and his team did for me when I was younger.

— JOHN MCDONALD

MORROWIND: I love the feeling of being a hero. Games like *Morrowind* make me want to do good things in real life and be, for lack of a better word, chivalrous!

— MARCUS TOFT

URULIVE: *UruLive* crossed the line into art because it created an experience that transcended normal human discourse. It was more than a game; it was a social event. It has changed the way that I think about art, technology, the environment, the tremendous capacity of the mind — everything!

— SOPHIE BRENNAN

EVERQUEST: Ironically, this game has made me far more social. I've learned to rely on others and how to be a better friend. I no longer live in a shell, and I find that I actually have a voice.

— PHILIP "FERGY" MCINTYRE

HALO: I loved this game so much that it inspired me to write my own fantasy and science-fiction stories. *Warcraft III* had a big impact on me, too, because it's the game that got me started on the PC, and that's what lead me to subscribe to *PC Gamer*.

— BRIAN COLEMAN

DIABLO: My wife figured out that it was affecting me when, late one night, she woke me up because I was thrashing around in our bed. She shook me and asked what I was dreaming about. Still half-asleep, I replied, "I'm clicking on doors!"

— ANTHONY PELOTTE

EB GAMES™
electronics boutique®

"We can honestly say that we've never witnessed RTS battles that so perfectly capture the epic, brutal nature of ancient warfare." —PC Gamer, April 2004

Pre-order and receive a FREE exclusive behind-the-scenes DVD including:

- > **Developer Interview**
- > **Official Game Trailer**
- > **Screenshots** (10 in total, 3 exclusive)
- > **Concept art**
- > **Call of Duty™: United Offensive™ trailer**

*Limit one per customer. While supplies last. See sales associate for complete details. Typographical errors are not the responsibility of EB Games.

PC $49.99

Call 1-800-800-5166 for the store nearest you or visit us at www.ebgames.com

EB GAMES™ electronics boutique®

We take games seriously™

ACTIVISION

Letters

MMOHGODPLEASESTOP!

What is this, the onset of the Apocalypse? I've never seen so many MMORPGs in my life! Will someone please explain to me where the fun is in these games? I've tried them all: *Ultima*, *EverCrap*, *Shadowbane*, *Asheron's Call* — they're all boring, expensive treadmills designed to maximize company profits at the expense of gamers' enjoyment. I mean, who wouldn't rather see Blizzard make *StarCraft 2* — or, heaven forbid, something entirely new — instead of an MMOG? When will the single-player glory return and this massively multiplayer madness end?

— CDEWARIOR

Let's face it: online games are here to stay. But so is single-player goodness. If you want to play an RPG that's new and fun right now, try* Beyond Divinity, KOTOR, *or* Sacred. *Also, make sure you read this month's Alternate Lives column (page 96), where Desslock looks at cool single-player RPGs!

Beyond Divinity **is helping keep the single-player RPG healthy.**

QUESTION of the Month

What are some of your favorite hobbies besides playing PC games? What do you like to do when you aren't shooting at monsters or hopping from one digital hex to another? Share your passions with us at *letters@pcgamer.com*, and one randomly chosen respondent will receive a free reason to stay indoors (i.e., a game)!

This is how Corey spends his free time.

GODZEERRA!

Are there any games available, or on the horizon, that involve creating or playing as giant, city-destroying monsters? I'm a big fan of old-school Commodore 64 games like *Crush, Crumble & Chomp* and *Mail-Order Monsters*, and would love to play some updates. Thanks!

— BRYAN REMBERT

Funny you should ask, Bryan, because Coconut Monkey has been working on just that sort of game. Expect* Gravy-Gulpin' Goliaths *to ship to retail alongside* Duke Nukem Forever *in December 2009.

A PRICE ON BRILLIANCE?

As a longtime PC gamer, I instinctively want to root for pretty much any game on our platform, especially PC-exclusive titles. But I can't help but be annoyed by all the $20 budget games adorning stores shelves. I'm not talking about older games that have been discounted or re-released, of course — I'm talking about new "value" games that debut at a $19.99 price-point.

I mean, aren't these games always cheaply cobbled-together hackjobs (à la *Hero X* and *Monster Garage*) and designed solely for non-gamers who don't know enough not to buy them? Are any of them ever worth purchasing?

— TYRONE W.

Apache Longbow Assault, *The History Channel's* The Alamo, I Was an Atomic Mutant! — *these are just a few of the $20 titles that we've recommended in the last year or so. There's no shame in a publisher releasing a lower-spec game at a lower price-point, and we go out of our way to identify the ones that are worth playing. (Of course, we pull no punches with the crappy ones, either.)*

MONKEY MUG

Just wanted to let you know that I was the first person on the Stromm server to claim *PC Gamer*'s exclusive *EverQuest* shield (July 2004 issue)! From now on, I will display it proudly! I just wish it had come with a picture of Coconut Monkey's face on the front. Even with that one minor flaw, I give your shield a 93% and award it a well-deserved Editors' Choice!

— ADAMA OTTERBOURG

We're glad you're enjoying our free* EverQuest *goodie, Adama. Wear it well!

A GOOD DVD IS HARD TO FIND

I can't find a DVD-ROM edition of *Unreal Tournament 2004* anywhere. All the places I've looked are either sold-out or they have only used copies. Do you guys know of any stores or sites that still have unopened versions for sale? I need to get one immediately!!!

— ALEX GOODKIND

Sorry to hear about your troubles, Alex. Indeed, tracking down the DVD edition of UT 2004 can be difficult. Try www.bgames.com — as of press time, they had it in stock.

OOPS! In July 2004's Desktop General column, William R. Trotter's official website should've been listed as *www.trotterbooks.com*. Also, in June 2004's *Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow* review, the ESRB rating should've been T.

Join the Adventure and Embark Upon Epic Quests!

EverQuest

Omens of War

©2004 Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. SOE and the SOE logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. PlayStation and the PS Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. PS2 and the PS2 logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. The ratings icon is a trademark of the Entertainment Software Association. Developed by Sony Online Entertainment Inc. Published by Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. Distributed by Ubisoft Entertainment under license from Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. Ubisoft and the Ubisoft logo are trademarks of Ubisoft Entertainment in the U.S. and/or other countries. Software platform logo (TM and ©) IEMA. Online play requires internet connection and compatible platform; ISP fees may apply. Subscription required after free trial

ALIENWARE

THE ORIGINAL ULTIMATE GAMING MACHINE

Next Generation PCI-Express Technology Now Available!

AREA-51™ PERFORMANCE OPTION

Exclusive Alienware® Chassis

NEW! High-Performance 480-Watt PSU

Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor with HT Technology 3.40 GHz

Advanced 800 MHz System Bus and 512 MB High-Performance L2 Cache

High-Performance Heatsink-Cooling System

Intel® 875P Chipset-Based Motherboard

1024 MB Dual-Channel PC-3200 DDR SDRAM at 400 MHz

PNY® Verto® GeForce™ FX 5900 XT 128 MB DDR

Astral Blue Alienice™ Video Cooling System

160 GB 7200 RPM Serial ATA-150 RAID 0 Array 16 MB Cache

Creative Sound Blaster® Audigy 2™ ZS 7.1 Advanced 24-bit Audio

Integrated Gigabit Ethernet Controller

Black 16X DVD-ROM Drive

Plextor® PX-712A 12X DVD±RW

Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition

Optimized & Configured for High Performance

AlienCare: Advanced Technical Support including:

1-Year Personalized Online Support Portal with Chat and Forums

1-Year Toll-Free 24/7 Phone Support by Alienware Technicians

1-Year On-site Home Service

$2,159.00 or as low as **$65**/mo.[1] After $80.00 rebate.

ACCESSID: PCG0904SA1

AREA-51™ EXTREME OPTION[2]

Exclusive Alienware® Chassis

High-Performance 650-Watt Max PSU

NEW! Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor 560 with HT Technology (3.60 GHz, 1 MB L2 Cache, 800 MHz FSB)

NEW! Intel® 925X Express Chipset-Based Motherboard

NEW! 1024 MB Dual-Channel PC-4200 DDR2 SDRAM at 533 MHz

Next Generation PNY® Verto® GeForce™ 6800 Ultra for PCI-Express 256 MB DDR3

240 GB 7200 RPM Serial ATA-150 RAID 0 Array 16 MB Cache

Creative Sound Blaster® Audigy 2™ ZS 7.1 Advanced 24-bit Audio

Plextor® PX-712A 12X DVD±RW

Optimized & Configured for High Performance

$3,449.00 or as low as **$104**/mo.[1] After $80.00 rebate.

ACCESSID: PCG0904SA3

PNY TECHNOLOGIES

6 MONTHS SAME AS CASH FINANCING[1]
AND OTHER GREAT PROMOTIONS. APPLY ONLINE!

Awards/Quotes: Award(s) and quote(s) listed do not pertain to a specific system or configuration. **Pricing:** Prices, configurations, and availability may change without notice. Taxes and shipping charges not shown. Alienware can not be held responsible for errors in photography or typography. Actual case may vary in design. **Warranty/Support:** For complete information on warranty, support, and on-site or depot service, visit www.alienware.com. **Drives/Modems:** For hard drives, GB means 1 billion bytes and accessible capacity may vary depending on configuration. For CD-ROM, DVD-ROM, CD-RW, and DVD±RW drive(s), maximum data transfer rates may vary and discs created with these drives may not be compatible with all drives and players. For modems and network cards/hardware, maximum achievable data transfer rates may vary. **Gigabit Ethernet:** Term indicates compliance with IEEE standard 802.3ab for Gigabit Ethernet. Network and infrastructure required for high-speed transmission connection to Gigabit Ethernet server. **Trademarks/Copyright Notices:** Alienware, the Alienware logo, Area-51 and Area-51m are registered trademarks or trademarks of Alienware Corporation. The term Verto, the Verto icon and the PNY logo are registered trademarks of PNY Technologies, Inc. Intel, Intel Inside, Intel Inside logo, Intel Centrino, Intel Centrino logo, and Pentium, are trademarks or registered trademarks of Intel Corporation or its subsidiaries in the United States and other countries. All other registered trademarks and trademarks are the property of their respective owners. **Notes:** (1) Subject to credit approval. Terms subject to change without notice. See Alienware credit card terms and conditions for complete information. Annual Percentage Rate: 21.90%. Minimum finance charge: $1.00. (2) Same configuration as performance option, but with the changes listed. (3) Chassis refers to the internal chassis and not to the entire external case.

"A Far Cry loving, Doom 3 playing notebook...
the power you need for high-end gaming."
- PC Gamer Editors' Choice Award

AREA-51m™ PERFORMANCE OPTION

Exclusive Alienware® Case with Magnesium Alloy Chassis[3]
Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor 3.20 GHz - (Supports Hyper-Threading Technology)
Advanced 800 MHz System Bus and 512 KB Advanced Transfer Cache
High-Performance SiS® Chipset Motherboard with AGP 8X
Next-Generation NVIDIA® GeForce™ FX Go5700 128 MB DDR
512 MB PC-3200 DDR SDRAM at 400 MHz
40 GB 7200 RPM Ultra ATA-100 Hard Drive 8 MB Cache
Removable 24X/8X CD-RW/DVD Combo Drive
Removable Wireless 802.11g PCMCIA Network Card
15.4" WideSXGA+ TFT Active Matrix LCD Cinema Display
5.1 3D Surround Sound with S/PDIF Digital Output
Built-In 10/100/1000 Mb Ethernet LAN and 56 K Modem
Infrared Wireless Multimedia Remote with Mouse Control
3-in-1 Built-In Media Card Reader
Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
Optimized & Configured for High Performance
AlienCare: Advanced Technical Support including:
1-Year Personalized Online Support Portal with Chat and Forums
1-Year Toll-Free 24/7 Phone Support by Alienware Technicians
1-Year On-site Service

$2,459.00 or as low as **$74**/mo.[1] After $90.00 rebate.

ACCESSID: PCG0904SM1

Area-51m Notebook Gaming

The award-winning Area-51m notebook gaming system allows you to experience the power of an extreme-performance desktop system in a highly mobile package. Performance is taken to a new level with the availability of Intel® Pentium® 4 Processors up to 3.40 GHz, auto-switch AC adapters with an amazing 160 watts of power, and the absolute latest in graphics technology. Backed by award-winning customer support, the Area-51m delivers the ultimate notebook gaming experience.

AREA-51m™ EXTREME OPTION[2]

Exclusive Alienware® Case with Magnesium Alloy Chassis[3]
Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor 3.40 GHz - (Supports Hyper-Threading Technology)
Advanced 800 MHz System Bus and 512 KB Advanced Transfer Cache
Next-Generation NVIDIA® GeForce™ FX Go5700 128 MB DDR
1024 MB PC-3200 DDR SDRAM at 400 MHz
80 GB 7200 RPM Ultra ATA-100 Hard Drive 8 MB Cache
NEW! Removable 4X/16X DVD±RW/CD-RW Combo Drive
Optimized & Configured for High Performance

$2,889.00 or as low as **$87**/mo.[1] After $90.00 rebate.

ACCESSID: PCG0904SM3

ALIENWARE
THE ORIGINAL ULTIMATE GAMING MACHINE

To receive an Instant Rebate on an Area-51 or Area-51m, enter an AccessID at:
WWW.ALIENWARE.COM/PCG

For the latest pricing and promotions go online or call:
1.800.ALIENWARE | 1.800.254.3692

MYST IV: REVELATION

Ubisoft-Montreal reveals *Myst*'s final, lingering secrets

One of *Myst IV*'s opening puzzles is figuring out how to turn on the power to Tomahna, Atrus' home Age.

Given hardcore *Myst* fans' lukewarm reception to Cyan's experimental *Uru: Ages Beyond Myst*, it seemed inevitable that the next chapter would take a step back toward traditional gameplay. The bombshell is that Ubisoft-Montreal has been secretly gearing up *Myst IV: Revelation*, a true adventure sequel to *Myst III: Exile*. Now, the studio better known for its action titles is returning the franchise to its roots.

But before *Myst*-haters roll their eyes, let it be known that the development team is aware of your preconceived notions. Its goal is to change the perception that *Myst* adventures are boring, lifeless puzzlers that are impossible to solve.

For starters, interaction with other characters is key here. The family drama begun in *Myst* continues, as Atrus (again played by Rand Miller, creator of the series) invites you to the Age of Tomahna to help keep tabs on his villainous sons, Sirrus and Achenar. (As *Myst* diehards know, Atrus had them confined to prison Ages.) Predating the events in *Uru* by many years, you'll also meet his 10-year-old daughter, Yeesha.

Besides the return to *Myst III*-style navigation (360-degree camera view, point-and-click movement), another throwback is full-motion video, with actors seamlessly placed into the 2D pre-rendered environments. But Ubisoft has taken great care to enliven *Myst*'s world with creatures, swaying flora, and unexpected scripted sequences. (At one point, while investigating an abandoned tarp, a surprise gust of wind kicks up and you're suddenly hang-gliding!)

A common complaint is that *Myst* puzzles are often arbitrary to the story. In *Myst IV*, Ubisoft strives to weave the brainteasers naturally into the environment and plot, and some will require assistance from the non-player characters you meet. If one of the puzzles — derived from mathematics, mechanics, sound, and riddles — turns out to be too tough, you can use a hint system built right into the menu screen.

From my chats with the developers, it's obvious they want to make the best *Myst* game ever and appeal to a wider audience. The final fate of Sirrus and Achenar will be revealed this September. ■ CHUCK OSBORN

VITAL STATS

CATEGORY: Adventure

DEVELOPER: Ubisoft-Montreal

PUBLISHER: Ubisoft

WWW: mystrevelation.com

RELEASE DATE: September 2004

DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD: Ubisoft's Montreal studio is one of the most respected development houses in the world, having created the *Splinter Cell* games and *Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time*. It also has *Splinter Cell 3* and a sequel to *The Sands of Time* in the works.

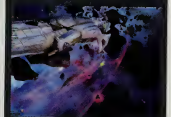
INCOMING!

Tasty slices of gooey gaming pie

CONFLICT: VIETNAM

■ The *Conflict: Desert Storm* series trades Baghdad for Da Nang to tell the tale of a four-man squad engaged in combat during the 1968 Tet Offensive. (Dev: Pivotal Games; Pub: Take-Two Interactive; Release Date: October 2004)

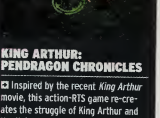
Highlights: Context-sensitive controls; vehicles; booby-traps; the ambient sights and sounds of war



NEXUS: THE JUPITER INCIDENT

■ Originally in development at Philos as *Imperium Galactica III*, this gorgeous space-strategy game has been reworked by Mithis and is no longer part of the *IG* series. (Dev: Mithis; Pub: HD Interactive; Release Date: October 2004)

Highlights: Control up to 12 battleships; 30 missions; fantastic zoom effects; planets based on real physics



KING ARTHUR: PENDRAGON CHRONICLES

■ Inspired by the recent *King Arthur* movie, this action-RTS game re-creates the struggle of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table against the Saxons, Picts, and barbarian tribes. (Dev: Game Consulting/Spore Games; Pub: TBD; Release Date: TBD)

Highlights: Highly modified Torque graphics engine (*Starsiege: Tribes*); mythical creatures; unifying Britain

Solar Power
FIFTH DAWN
also available online
MAGIC
The Gathering®
www.magicthegathering.com

ARMIES OF EXIGO

Take the fight below-ground in this terrific-looking fantasy-based RTS game

As *PCG*'s resident hardcore-RTS junkie, I've been pretty excited about *Armies of Exigo* since I first saw it at EA's pre-E3 event. Sure, it has some of the trappings of the genre — the requisite three races (in this case, Human, Fallen, and Beast), multiple resources, and the usual unit and weapon upgrades — but based on my experience playing some multiplayer games, *Exigo* looks like it'll bring some tasty new dishes to the table as well.

VITAL STATS

- **CATEGORY:** Real-Time Strategy
- **DEVELOPER:** Black Hole Games
- **PUBLISHER:** EA
- **WWW:** eagames.com
- **RELEASE DATE:** Fall 2004

Some maps will feature areas with the subterranean levels exposed, letting you rain down a barrage of death. INSET: Double-headed dragons get us excited.

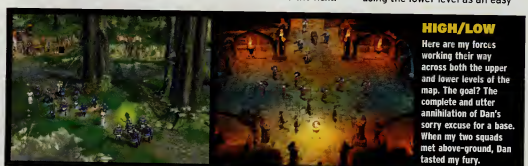
First up are the maps, which feature surface *and* subterranean levels, both of which are packed full of resources and strategically important access points. More than simply being a cool feature that doesn't really add anything beyond cool aesthetics, the power of venturing underground became apparent almost immediately in one multiplayer bout.

Roughly five minutes into the match, the AI enemy split its forces in two, with half of them heading across the surface and the other half moving below-ground. As the surface force attacked the front line of my allies' base, the AI's second group used a cave entrance to send in a devastating flanking force. Needless to say, the battle was over before I could even think about sending reinforcements.

Also, because there are resources underground, rooting out and eliminating the enemy is going to take a concerted effort, and it'll require managing forces operating above- *and* below-ground. Thankfully, the controls are extremely intuitive — simply hit Tab and you move from one level to the next.

The other aspect that really impressed me was *Exigo*'s AI. Beyond the example above, it effectively used its spells and other abilities (in one instance, it teleported a massive force into the rear of my main base, causing much carnage), and it made great use of the subterranean level. For example, the AI realized that I was using the lower level as an easy means of moving my forces into position, so it placed defensive structures to create deadly bottlenecks to slow my army's advance. (Morris, on the other hand, feared the caverns and left his base exposed to a withering attack by my powerful meteor storm.)

I'm still curious about the game's single-player campaign, especially how the surface and subterranean fighting will be implemented without the entire affair becoming tedious. Nevertheless, the quality of my multiplayer session left me confident that Black Hole is well on its way toward crafting a quality RTS game. ■ **WILLIAM HARMS**

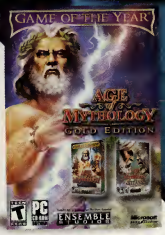


HIGH/LOW

Here are my forces working their way across both the upper and lower levels of the map. The goal? The complete and utter annihilation of Dan's sorry excuse for a base. When my two squads met above-ground, Dan tasted my fury.

WAL★MART
ALWAYS LOW PRICES.
Always

Jonathan, Wal-Mart Customer



PLEASE CLEAN UP YOUR OWN DROOL

LATEST GAMES.
HOTTEST PRICES.
SALIVATING YET?

Walmart.com

Titles, quantities and release dates may vary by individual store location.
© 2004 Wal-Mart

THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH

A gloriously cinematic RTS game that matches the epic scale of the movies

Riders of Rohan arrive to turn the tide of battle. INSET: Even whole squads of Gondor soldiers are no match for a mountain troll.

As I played through a pre-alpha build of *Battle for Middle-Earth*, I found myself uttering the phrase "Hey, that's just like in the movies" a lot. Like when a mountain troll wallowed hip-deep into a crowd of Gondor soldiers and swept them aside with a backhand. Or when a group of cavalry, led by the valiant Faramir himself, tore through a pack of orcs, cutting a huge swath in their ranks. And when an idle group of orc fighters formed a ring of spectators around two of their in-fighting comrades.

You get the idea. When a game looks this great and it hasn't even hit alpha yet, that's a very, very good sign.

VITAL STATS

CATEGORY: Real-Time Strategy
DEVELOPER: EA
PUBLISHER: EA
WWW: eagames.com
RELEASE DATE: November 2004

CRUEL INTENTIONS

Controlling the evil forces of Mordor, I invaded the territory surrounding the kingdom of Gondor and immediately began churning out orc fighters and archers by the horde. Humanoid units are controlled in squads of 10 to 20, which is fortunate because Mordor's strongest tactic is to overwhelm the enemy with massive numbers of troops. Orc Pits pump out orcs continuously and automatically at no cost to your resources (a perk of playing as Mordor), so you'll never find yourself shorthanded. The other Mordor units I got to play with were mountain trolls, drum trolls, and catapults.

My forces were attacked by wave after wave of Gondor's defense-oriented units, whose foot soldiers, archers, cavalry, and trebuchets were sturdier than my orc units but were no match for my army's sheer numbers and speed. Gondor's forte is its superior base defenses, fortified by strong, high walls and buildings that anything less than a mountain troll or catapult can barely scratch.

SO REAL, IT HURTS

EA has spared no expense in making the game feel as lifelike as possible. One of the illusion-shattering obstacles to controlling large armies in most strategy games is that every soldier is typically identical. Not so here — each unit type is rendered in at least a couple of different visual flavors. Within a single horde of orcs, for example, I could see at least three or four different models, and I also noted mountain trolls in multiple sizes and skin colors.

Also, EA used motion-capturing to produce many of the human and humanoid creatures' animations,

giving the units smooth, natural movements that reinforce the feeling that you're playing an epic battle from the film trilogy.

Bases have received the same detailed treatment. Most of the structures I encountered were filled with hard-working creatures that demonstrated the building's function while also making it look like part of a living, breathing world. For example, a Troll Cage showed a mountain troll in chains being whipped by an orc trainer. A slaughterhouse — Mordor's equivalent of a farm — gorily presented animals walking into one end of the building as an orc carried slabs of meat out of the other. In another part of a Mordor base, an armory featured a pair of orcs pouring molten metal into molds to make cruel-looking swords.

On the battlefield, the game includes a psychological element. When my hordes defeated a cluster of enemy soldiers, the winners raucously cheered in celebration. Small groups of enemy units would cower in fear as my massive mountain trolls approached — their fear making them less effective in combat. (Not that they would've stood a chance against my mighty trolls. Human fools!) And there'll be plenty of other ways to use battlefield psychology to your advantage. For instance, killing 100 Gondor soldiers enhanced my catapults with a macabre secondary ability — launching human remains into the midst of the enemy's troops to inspire terror and inflict minor damage.

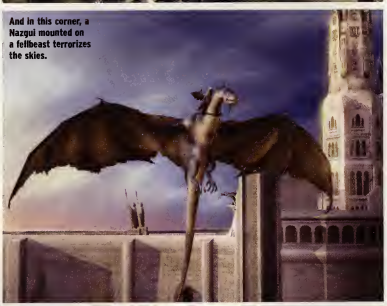
SCREAMING BLOODY MORDOR

Unlike a traditional RTS game, *BFME* doesn't have control bars on the bottom or side of the screen: EA has replaced them with a contextual menu that appears when you click on a building. It may take you a little while to become accustomed to the unconventional interface, but the benefit is that your view of the action and the beautiful battlefields will be uncluttered by excess windows. Before entering a battle, your next engagement will be chosen from a finely detailed (and fully 3D) map of Middle-earth that conveys a sense of the world's vastness that never quite came across in the films.

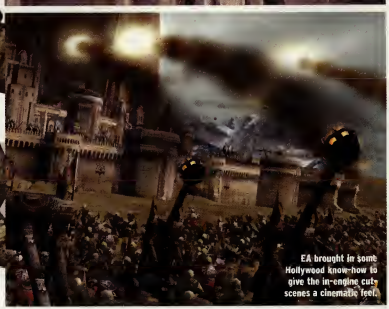
With no more *Lord of The Rings* movies in the works (at least until Peter Jackson gets his hands on the rights to *The Hobbit*), Tolkien fans have something to look forward to in *Battle for Middle-Earth*. If it looks this good in action now, the finished product should really be something to see when it ships this fall.

■ D.J. STAPLETON

Looking east at dawn on the fifth day



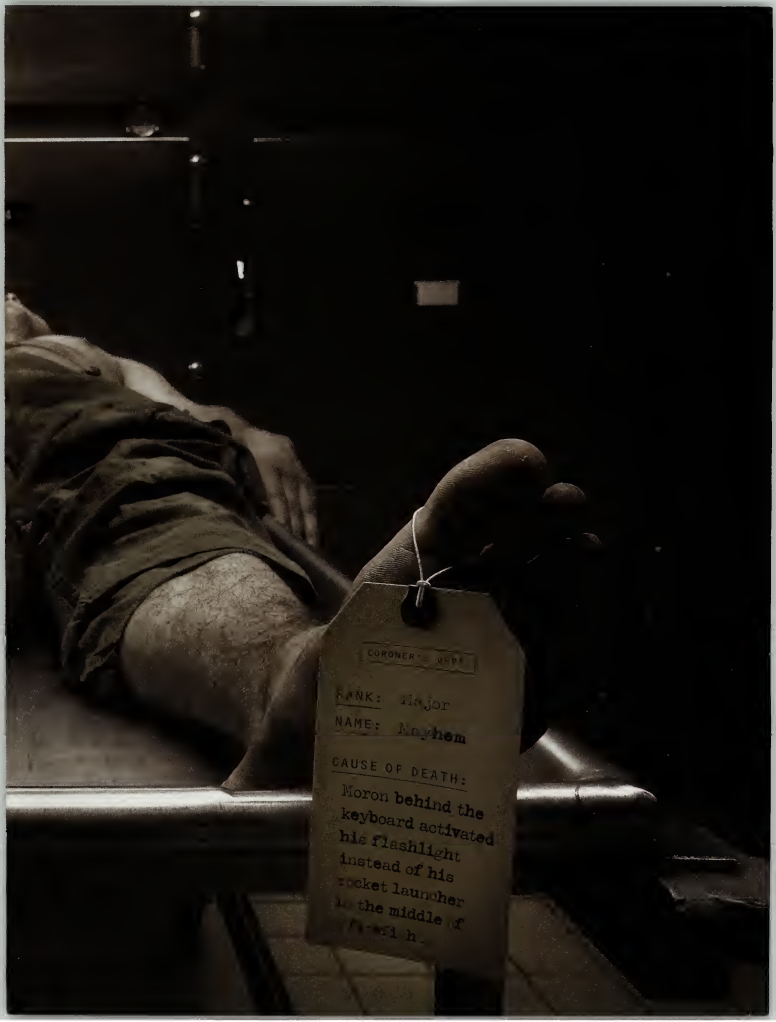
And in this corner, a Nazgul mounted on a fellbeast terrorizes the skies.



EA brought in some Hollywood know-how to give the in-engine cut-scenes a cinematic feel.

WITHOUT A ZBO
IN A GAME LIKE DOOM 3™, TIME IS NOT ON YOUR SIDE. YOU NEED RESPONSIVE ACTIO
THE WORLD'S FIRST INTERCHANGEABLE, CUSTOM KEYBOARD SYSTEM. WHETHER YOU'RE
OR THE UNIVERSAL SHOOTER AND ACTION GAMING KEYSET, ZBOARD'S ULTRA-INTUITIVE
RELOAD OR JUST GET THE HELL OUT OF THE WAY, WITH LIGHTNING FAST MANEUVERABI
MORE DROPPING GRENADES WHEN YOU SHOULD BE CROUCHING. WITH ZBOARD, IT'S ALL TH
GRAPHICS AND LABELED COMMANDS. YOU'LL BE GETTING THE ULTIMATE DOOM 3 GAMI
AVAILABLE AT:
MICRO CENTER
COMPUSA
© Ideazon, Inc. 2004. All rights reserved. Ideazon and Zboard are owned and registered by Ideazon, Inc. All other trademarks referred to are the property of their respective owners. US and other patent pending. DOOM 3 characters and images © 2004 Id Software, Inc. All Rights Reserved. DOOM and ID are registered trademarks of Id Software, Inc. in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office and/or some other countries. All Id Software, Inc. property is used under license. Based on a game ratio MATTER (17:7). Visit www.esrb.org for more information.

ARD, YOU'RE TOAST.
WWW.ZBOARD.COM
DOOM 3
AND YOU NEED IT QUICK. INTRODUCING ZBOARD™.
LAYING WITH THE LIMITED EDITION DOOM 3 KEYSET.
KEYPAD LAYOUT ALLOWS YOU TO CHANGE WEAPONS.
LITY. NO MORE FUMBLING THROUGH THE MANUAL. NO
ERE IN FRONT OF YOU. AND WITH ZBOARD'S CUSTOM
G EXPERIENCE. VISIT ZBOARD.COM FOR MORE INFO.
STEP 1
STEP 2
STEP 3
STEP 4
LONDON DRUGS
Fry's ELECTRONICS
ZBOARD™
YOUR MOST LETHAL WEAPON.


CORONER'S CASE
RANK: Major
NAME: Mayhem
CAUSE OF DEATH:
Moron behind the keyboard activated his flashlight instead of his rocket launcher

©2006 Electronic Arts Inc. Electronic Arts, EA, EA GAMES, and the EA GAMES logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of Electronic Arts Inc. in the U.S. and/or other countries. All rights reserved. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. EA GAMES™ is an Electronic Arts™ brand.

PC CD-ROM SOFTWARE

PC DVD-ROM SOFTWARE

RATING PENDING RP ESRB

Visit www.esrb.org for updated rating information.

ROMANCE. ONE OF FIVE NEW REASONS TO LIVE.

Now, a whole new generation is in your hands. Satisfy their primal urges, or pursue less sweaty life goals like *Fortune*, *Knowledge*, *Family*, and *Popularity*. The choice is up to you. Come to think of it, pretty much everything is. Take charge at eagames.com

AGE 17 Get to second base with Marla. Try your luck at stealing third.

AGE 23 Date your way through the phonebook. Twice.

AGE 43 Have a mid-life crisis.
Trade in your 40 year-old for two 20's.
AGE 59 Spend your golden years
reading books. Like the Kama Sutra.
The SIMS 2
COMING SEPTEMBER 17TH
EA GAMES
Challenge Everything™

CALL OF DUTY UNITED OFFENSIVE

Our fearless leader happily enlists for more Axis-bashing

Incoming! Artillery fire kills more men in war than any other weapon...and here's why.

BELOW: Many vehicles have a second gunner position from which you can deal out machinegun death in multiplay. BOTTOM: British commandos can make a hair-raising escape in a captured gunboat — but they won't get away without a chase.

Snow. Tanks. Stuka strikes. Sniper fire. I love this stuff — so I relished the opportunity to become the first person outside Activision to play *Call of Duty: United Offensive*, the first expansion pack to our 2003 Action Game of the Year.

For our hands-on playtest, I played through three complete levels of the beta build. In the first, a *huge* mission set during the Battle of the Bulge, I was an American paratrooper pushing back against the Nazi offensive. After crossing a sniper-plagued field to reach a cluster of houses, I fought the Axis room-by-room (including one in flames). Desperation set in as my squad defended a two-story house from swarms of infantry and tanks. I had to bazooka three Panzers, all while fighting hand-to-hand against infiltrators.

And it still wasn't over. There was one final push to a well-defended farmhouse that required a sneaky flanking attack to hit the German nest from behind.

Next up was a Russian-campaign level. As a conscript in the back of an unprotected truck, I started out heading through a gut-wrenching artillery barrage. Once at the contested village, I was issued a rifle with three bullets. (Hey, you didn't even *get* a weapon at the start of *Call of Duty*'s Russian campaign!)

After surviving the artillery barrage by cowering in a trench, I repelled a wave of incoming infantrymen by mowing them down with machineguns and a flamethrower — a weapon introduced in this add-on.

The final treat was playing the bomber mission, where you're a British turret gunner on a bomber headed over the Reich. After weathering a flak barrage, I trained my sights on a swarm of attacking Messerschmidt fighters, "leading" the targets to coax them into my stream of lead. But I wasn't just sitting around — engine fires and slain door gunners required me to hop out and scramble around the bomber on several occasions. It was high tension as the bomber began breaking up in mid-air. Not good!

I also got the chance to dive into a 16-person multiplayer match on Gray Matter's LAN. Great new multiplayer additions include a variety of tanks, flak guns, Jeeps, and infantry weapons, plus an ascending rank system rewards you with call-able airstrikes. Bazookas and satchel charges make infantrymen a definite menace to tank drivers, and you can now "cook off" grenades to land direct hits when you lob them. We also played a new mode in which one team has to control all five of a map's flags to claim victory — and needless to say, winning demanded team coordination.

I'm psyched about this one. My playtest of *United Offensive* was a scorcher, and promises a top-notch expansion that'll be worth every penny. ■ DAN MORRIS

VITAL STATS

CATEGORY: First-Person Shooter

DEVELOPER: Gray Matter Studios

PUBLISHER: Activision

WWW: callofduty.com

RELEASE DATE: Fall 2004

Tactics.

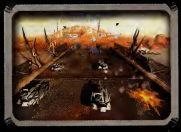
Combat.

Survival.

Years of peace have ended, as the brutal Terran Empire seeks to claim Morningstar Prime, the last colony of the Northern Star Alliance. Surrender is not an option for Captain Jacob Angelus and his brave colonists who battle for the fate of their home and their lives. To survive, they'll have to outmaneuver superior Empire weaponry and the vicious alien race allied with the Terrans. The forces are assembled; the soldiers stand ready. Let the battle begin.

GROUND CONTROL II
OPERATION EXODUS

www.groundcontrol2.com



VIVENDI UNIVERSAL GAMES

SIERRA

POWERED BY gameSpy

MASSIVE ENTERTAINMENT

The way it's meant to be played

PC CD-ROM SOFTWARE

ESRB TEEN T

Blood and Gore
Language
Violence

© 2004 Massive Entertainment. All rights reserved. Ground Control, Massive Entertainment and the Massive Entertainment logo are registered trademarks of Massive Entertainment AB in the U.S. and/or other countries. Published by Vivendi Universal Games International. Sierra and the Sierra logo are registered trademarks or trademarks of Sierra Entertainment, Inc. in the U.S. and/or other countries. GameSpy and the "Powered by GameSpy" design are trademarks of GameSpy Industries, Inc. The NVIDIA logo and "The Way It's Meant to be Played" logo are registered trademarks or trademarks of NVIDIA Corporation in the United States and/or other countries. All other trademarks are property of their respective owners.

The Undead attack a Gauri company from all sides. INSET: The story (about amnesiac immortals) is told through in-engine cut-scenes.

KOHAN II: KINGS OF WAR

Who knew that expanding Undead empires could be so much fun?

TimeGate Studios set a high bar for itself in 2001 when it put out the low-profile but surprisingly good *Kohan: Immortal Sovereigns*. That game walked away with our award for Best Real-Time Strategy Game of 2001. So when I got my hands on the developer's follow-up effort, my expectations were high.

Despite competently making the move from 2D to 3D, *Kohan II* isn't quite keeping up with the graphical flare of other next-generation RTS games. Graphics aren't everything, though. During my playtest of an alpha build, I was impressed by the game's unique brand of unit/resource management and strategic play.

I took turns playing as four of the game's six sides: the Undead, the Humans, the Dracuga, and the Gauri. I didn't find any huge noticeable difference between them, outside of looks. Each has a couple of varieties of foot soldiers, archers, mounted units, giant siege units, settlers, and builders.

Instead of being churned out individually, *Kohan II*'s units are grouped into companies of one to eight units and can be headed up by a special hero (Kohan) unit. The size of your army is limited by both the number of companies your towns can support and the cost of upkeep, so I found battles to be on a smaller scale and more manageable than those in most RTS games.

The ability to create your own companies quickly and easily adds a deeper level of strategy not found in most RTS games. I also felt the need to keep my companies alive, since by leaving them to fight to the last man, I ran the risk of losing one of my hero units. I quickly learned when to hold 'em and when to fold 'em — when a battle wasn't going my way, I'd retreat and run back behind my town walls so that my companies could regain their strength.

The strategy of the game is all about taking and holding territory. When I started out on a randomly generated map, I immediately built a company of foot soldiers and set about exploring the map for new settlement sites, resource deposits, and independent structures that provide bonuses to production and available units. Once I conquered these strategic locations, I had to defend them from both the enemy and NPC raiders that constantly tested my city walls (which I upgraded as much as possible). I often found my forces stretched thin, and had to break off an attack to rush back to an undefended base.

It's already clear that *Kohan II* isn't a cookie-cutter RTS game: strategic gameplay is its main concern. Keep an eye out for it this fall. ■ D.J. STAPLETON

VITAL STATS

CATEGORY: Real-Time Strategy
DEVELOPER: TimeGate Studios
PUBLISHER: Gathering
WWW: timegate.com/kow
RELEASE DATE: September 2004

The Dracuga are a noble warrior race. Think Klingons with Yoda ears.

Better dress up. The game's on. With our huge selection, which of course includes the *Star Wars* catalog, it's always on. Plus, you get double points in the Reward Zone® program when you purchase any of these titles. At Best Buy®, gamers rule.

REWARD ZONE® PROGRAM MEMBERS EARN DOUBLE POINTS ON THE PURCHASE OF ANY OF THESE 3 GAME TITLES.

Reward Zone program membership fee is $9.99 for a 1-year membership. Available to US residents 13 years of age or older. Reward Zone program lets you earn points toward reward certificates redeemable for future in-store purchases. Points are not awarded for online purchases, prior purchases, Gift Cards, sales tax, shipping charges and restocking fees. Full program rules are available in store or at www.MyReward Zone.com. Offer does not apply to clearance items, demos and open-box merchandise. No rainchecks. VALID 9/1/04–9/30/04

BEST BUY
Thousands of Possibilities
GET YOURS

© 2004 Best Buy

Go to WWW.ESRB.ORG for video game & computer software game rating information.

LEISURE SUIT LARRY: MAGNA CUM LAUDE

You won't believe what Larry's nephew will do to see ***s

VITAL STATS

CATEGORY: Adventure
DEVELOPER: High-Voltage Software
PUBLISHER: Vivendi Universal
WWW: leisuresuitlarry.com
RELEASE DATE: Q4 2004

Most guys don't boast about getting their "hands on" Leisure Suit Larry...and I'm not about to break *that* tradition. But I did happily play a preview build of his new adventure, *Magna Cum Laude*, the long-awaited continuation of the bawdily low-brow franchise.

As you start off in Larry's college dorm room, you'll immediately notice two things. First, this is not the same Larry who tried to get it done in the last *Leisure Suit Larry* adventure, *Love for Sail!* — this time around you're playing as Larry Lovage, the nephew of the now graying Larry Laffer. And second, you and all your surroundings are rendered in vividly cartoonish 3D graphics.

Though you can control Larry with either a gamepad or a keyboard/mouse combo (using a shooter-friendly ASWD configuration), *Magna Cum Laude* is primarily an adventure game — albeit one supplemented with a healthy dose of mini-games. I spent a lot of time interacting with objects in Larry's room. (In a clever touch, the "skipped" *Leisure Suit Larry 4* plays on Larry's PC.)

If you know the *Leisure Suit Larry* series like the back of your hairy palm, then you probably know that Larry has one goal in mind: Get laid. *Magna Cum Laude* has a total of 15 hotties for Larry to proposition and 25 different locations covering Larry's dorm, campus grounds, and eventually the whole town of Walnut Log. Yep, this game is most definitely M-rated — after Larry flips on his radio, the neighbors yell, "Shut the hell up in there, we're trying to f***!"

Eavesdropping on conversations, you quickly learn that the hit new dating show *Swingles* is in town casting for an upcoming TV episode. To get the national exposure he craves, Larry needs to woo as many ladies as possible to convince the casting agent that he should be on the show.

Only homespun hottie Sally Mae Beauregard was available for us to hit on in this build. To seduce her, Larry has to win six mini-games, including three one-on-one conversations with Sally. To win at conversing, you control a swimming sperm at the bottom of the screen, steering it through a stream of good dialogue decisions (green icons) and bad ones (crude icons and belches). Between chats, you'll engage in mini-competitions such as cocktail mixing, line dancing, and a drinking game of flipping quarters to get Sally drunk.

The mini-games could become very repetitive, so hopefully there'll be more variation in the final product. The double-and-triple entendres are satisfyingly sleazy, though. Expect loveable loser Larry to bare his shortcomings this fall. ■ CHUCK OSBORN

A trio of monsters doesn't seem fair...'til you see triple the loot.

Inventory screens totally rock!

Zombies we get, but re-animated skeletons? Doesn't make sense.

DUNGEON LORDS

We'll dungeon-crawl over hot coals for this kingly action-RPG

Imagine a *Diablo* that's in 3D and lets you peek over your character's shoulder. That's the gist of the upcoming action-RPG *Dungeon Lords*. Coming this fall from DreamCatcher, this dungeon-crawler is being developed, designed, and written by D.W. Bradley (*Wizardry V–VII, Wizards & Warriors*), and it'll feature an epic single-player storyline and a multiplayer co-op mode playable by up to four players over LAN or Internet.

VITAL STATS

CATEGORY: Action/Roleplaying
DEVELOPER: Heuristic Park
PUBLISHER: DreamCatcher
WWW: dungeonlordsgame.com
RELEASE DATE: Q4 2004

We snagged an early build of the solo-player gameplay to see if the ol' *Wizardry* magic still sparkles, and found some encouraging things.

The alpha I played begins with you standing alone, nearly buck-nekkid, next to a roaring campfire in the woods. All around you is pitch darkness, except for the flickering light emanating from the fire and spooky noises blanketing the area. Howls start moving closer until you can make out a werewolf-like creature. Talk about being caught with your pants down!

Luckily for me, this build cheats by providing you with a full complement of armor and weapons. Press the Tab key, and you're taken to an inventory screen where you can outfit yourself with swords, bows, helmets, leggings, and any magical rings or items in your possession.

My weapon of choice was a fire staff that spits out a torrent of flame. The control scheme is simple: you move your character with the ASWD keys (similar to a shooter) and aim with the mouse. The left mouse button triggers your attack, while the right button defensively raises your shield.

Loot dropped by enemies (gold, weapons, potions) lies on the ground, waiting for you to manually pick up each item by standing over it and clicking the Shift key. (Loot-wrangling could stand to be tweaked; I'd rather see each item highlighted instead of being obscured by my standing atop it.)

But even at this early stage, smacking skeleton warriors and other monsters around with my fire staff was a lot of fun — and quite addictive. If *Dungeon Lords* provides the constant stream of rewards that *Diablo* did, it already has a customer.

■ CHUCK OSBORN

POSTAL 2: APOCALYPSE WEEKEND

Just when you thought your worst week ever was over...

Friday might've marked the last day of *Postal 2*'s "story," but *Apocalypse Weekend* marks the beginning of a wild expansion pack that unleashes your favorite psychopath on all-new areas, like an elephant preserve and the local Taliban training camp. Checking my morals at the load screen, I dove into the beta to witness the debauchery.

VITAL STATS

CATEGORY: First-Person Shooter
DEVELOPER/PUBLISHER: Running With Scissors
WWW: gopostal.com
RELEASE DATE: Summer 2004

Following the events of *Postal 2*, the Postal Guy wakes up in the hospital on Saturday morning. Besides a nasty head wound, he discovers that his trailer is about to be repossessed, his dog is on Death Row, and his old lady has flown the coop. He needs money...and fast.

Apocalypse Weekend is surprisingly linear compared to *Postal 2*. You're a man on a mission, and though there's still plenty of opportunity for random bloodshed (including reappearances by Gary Coleman), *Weekend*'s single-player storyline advances briskly. The graphics engine may be embarrassingly outdated, but it's doubtful that anyone plays *Postal 2* for pretty visuals.

If you're hungry for a second helping of sick humor (including killer cats and Mad Cow-infected zombies), *Apocalypse Weekend* is looking to be a slice of heaven. Or hell, depending on how you felt about the first five days.

■ CHUCK OSBORN

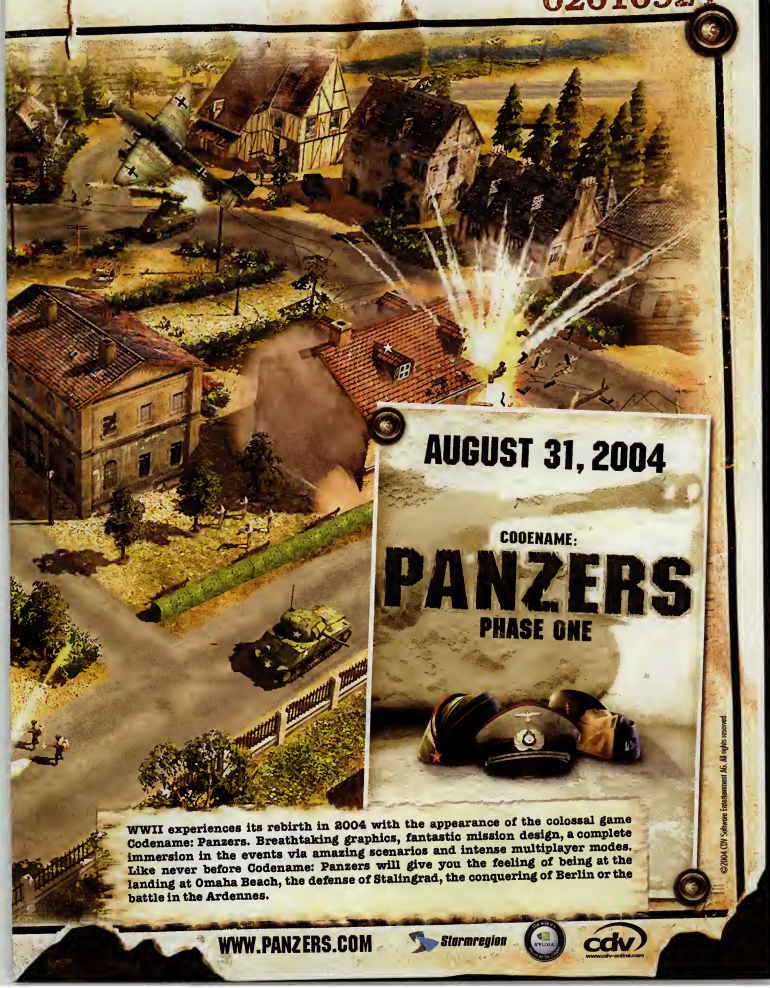
The shocker is that the Postal Guy isn't responsible for this grisly scene. But he's not above a little target practice...

INGAME SCREENSHOT KONTROLLIERT 14. März 1944

COMMING PANZERS PHASE ONE

14.15. 1. 8, GBT 224

02010924



WWII experiences its rebirth in 2004 with the appearance of the colossal game Codename: Panzers. Breathtaking graphics, fantastic mission design, a complete immersion in the events via amazing scenarios and intense multiplayer modes. Like never before Codename: Panzers will give you the feeling of being at the landing at Omaha Beach, the defense of Stalingrad, the conquering of Berlin or the battle in the Ardennes.

WWW.PANZERS.COM

Stormregion

cdv

©2004 CDV Software Entertainment AG. All rights reserved

CLAIM THE HIGH GROUND.
CONQUER THE DEPTHS.
© 2004 Cheap Interactive. All rights reserved. Electronic Arts and Artists of Large are trademarks or registered trademarks of Electronic Arts Inc. in the U.S. and/or other countries. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners.

ARMIES OF EXIGO
PC
CD-ROM
SOFTWARE
RATING PENDING
RP
Visit www.esrb.org for updated rating information.
ESRB
Break the Boundaries of the Battlefield
WWW.AOX.EA.COM
BLACK HOLE ENTERTAINMENT
Break new ground in Armies of Exigo as elves and knights wage war against vicious beasts in the forests and highlands of the surface, then descend into the dark and unforgiving caverns of the underworld to face off against an even darker evil – the Fallen. Whether fighting above ground or far beneath it, your campaign for supremacy knows no bounds.
ELECTRONIC ARTS™
Cast Powerful Spells
Command Massive Armies
Take Strategy to New Depths

HISTORY'S DECISIVE BATTLES

NEW HISTORY CHANNEL SERIES USES THE *ROME: TOTAL WAR* ENGINE

EVER SINCE WE FIRST SAW *Rome: Total War* at E3 2003, we've been breathlessly waiting for it to arrive. The depth of the strategy, the glorious 3D engine, the hundreds of units whaling away at each other, the towns and villages burning to the ground...surely, it'll be the stuff of gaming brilliance.

Starting July 16, you'll be able to get a good look at this powerful 3D engine when *Decisive Battles* debuts on The History Channel. This new half-hour show will not only offer historical details and context for some of ancient history's most famous battles, but it'll also use the *Rome* engine to bring those battles to spectacular life.

"*Decisive Battles* is unique in the way it uses the *Rome: Total War* engine," explains Margaret G. Kim, director of programming at The History Channel. "One of the cool aspects of the series is that our host, Matthew Settle, goes on location to the actual ancient battlefield locations. We go from the actual battlefields to the virtual ones, and the engine allows viewers a god's-eye view of the battlefield. They can see the massive numbers of troops, their formations, and the strategies that were used to win the [fight]."

The series will be approximately 50 percent battle re-enactments, with the other half of the show dedicated to Settle on location and expert analysis regarding the battle itself.

UPCOMING EPISODES

With a full 13-episode season already planned out, *Decisive Battles* is promising some thrilling virtual re-enactments that will push the *Rome: Total War* engine to its limit. Here are some of the future episodes that we're particularly excited about:

SPARTACUS AND THE SLAVE REVOLT: The gladiator Spartacus rebelled against his Roman masters in 73BCE and fought from one end of Italy to the other. Of particular interest will be the virtual depiction of the strategies that Spartacus employed.

TEUTOBURG FOREST: The loss of this battle devastated Rome, resulted in the loss of 10 percent of its army, and caused Roman general Varus to commit suicide. See how the German Arminius whipped the Romans in 9CE (9AD) by attacking them from all sides.

KADESH: In 1299 BCE, the Egyptians and the Hittites battled for control of Syria in one of the world's largest chariot battles.

WATLING STREET: Rome occupied Britain in 61CE, and after the queen of the Iceni tribe was whipped and her daughters raped by the Romans, the British tribes revolted. The 3D battle will show how the warrior queen Boudicca led 100,000 Britons against those dastardly Romans.

ADRIANOPLE: In 378CE, the end was in sight for the Roman empire. When population pressures forced the Goths across the Danube River, 100,000 of them formed huge columns and attacked the Romans at Adrianople. You can guess how it turned out.

This *Rome: Total War* screenshot shows the Carthaginians sieging a Roman city. If every conflict depicted on *Decisive Battles* presents this level of epic warmongering, it'll be must-see TV.

One of the more famous conflicts that'll be featured on the show is the Battle of Cannae (circa 216BCE), in which forces led by Hannibal of Carthage encircled the entire Roman army — roughly 70,000 men! — and defeated them. It was the biggest loss ever suffered by Rome.

Though it's obvious why Creative Assembly was interested in lending their engine to this endeavor, Kim tells us that the *Rome* engine was chosen by The History Channel because it offers "the most realistic three-dimensional characters [of any game engine]." And to ensure that the technology is used to its fullest extent, the show's producers are working closely with the folks at Creative Assembly to create the virtual re-enactments.

As dyed-in-the-wool advocates of all things PC gaming-related, we're thrilled that The History Channel is using a computer-game engine in such a prominent television series. It remains to be seen whether or not this use will develop into a new form of synergy between the two industries, but Kim seems pretty sold on the idea.

"We're trying something innovative with this show," she says, "and I'm excited to see how the videogame industry and the television industry will converge and evolve in the future. Perhaps we'll be starting a new trend with *Decisive Battles*." And best of all, Kim tells us that if *DB*'s first season is successful, The History Channel will look at doing a second season.

NEWS TICKER

News you can trust, from people you shouldn't

SIERRA SINKS Vivendi Universal Games restructured its business this June, scuttling 350 jobs and summarily shutting down Sierra Entertainment, the venerable Seattle-based games studio that created and published some of the biggest titles on the PC. Its successful franchises have included *King's Quest*, *S.W.A.T.*, *Leisure Suit Larry*, *Gabriel Knight*, the *Hoyle* brand of card- and boardgames, and, of course, *Half-Life*. VU Games will continue to use the Sierra brand in upcoming games. The *Hoyle* series, however, has been cancelled.

ATARI'S *SPIN* SERVE Play tennis the way it was meant to be played — with a keyboard and mouse. Atari has scooped up the PC publishing rights to *Top Spin*, a port of the Xbox tennis title that includes five sets of singles and doubles play, internet and LAN multiplay, and the likenesses of 16 professional players. You'll get served this September.

BIG-SCREEN *DOOM* id's hellish first-person shooter is being made into a movie — again. Universal Pictures has purchased the film rights to the license, stepping in after Warner Brothers' option on the project lapsed. There's a finished script based on the *Doom 3* storyline, and a director is supposedly ready to go, but no word yet on when the cameras will start rolling.

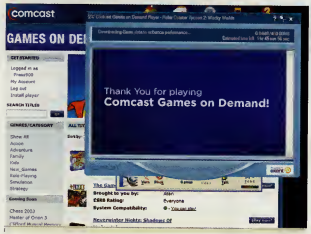
THE GAMIEST SHOW ON EARTH If you're in New York City Sept. 10–12, head over to iGames Expo 2004, a huge tradeshow and LAN event open to the general public. Check out *www.igamesexpo.com* for more info or to register.

WARHAMMER ONLINE AXED Games Workshop and developer Climax have canned *Warhammer Online*, the massively multiplayer game set in the tabletop-game universe. Games Workshop's general manager, Robin Dews, left this statement on the game's website: "This has been a difficult and painful decision, but it was taken following a full review of the progress of the game, costs to date, and future costs of the project." *Warhammer* fans out for a PC fix will have to wait for *Warhammer 40,000: Dawn of War*, an RTS game coming this fall.

DON'T MISS OUR AMAZING GIVEAWAY!

GAMING ON DEMAND

Cable giant unveils subscription-based gaming



This interface loads the games; alas, it's not as intuitive as it could be.

Media giant Comcast is best known for owning and operating G4 (recently renamed G4techTV), the first cable channel dedicated solely to games. But now the company is offering on-demand gaming over the internet. Using current cost of the service is $14.95/month (though it has a free two-week trial). Because Comcast owns G4techTV and offers high-speed internet access for parts of the country, a games service made a lot of sense for the company.

from IGN and G4; you can see a clip of a game, read the review, and then play the game, all from the same site."

In addition, G4techTV will offer Games on Demand subscribers original content such as video highlight clips from network series like *X-Play*, *Judgment Day*, and *Sweat*. MacLean also tells us that subscribers will receive exclusive news, sneak previews, and behind-the-scenes footage.

Based on our testing (see the adjacent sidebar for our impressions of Games on Demand), the biggest hurdle the service currently faces is a dearth of games. MacLean assures us that Comcast is constantly looking to add more games to its library.

> **"Subscribers will receive exclusive news, sneak previews, and behind-the-scenes footage."** – COMCAST ONLINE'S JEN MACLEAN

streaming technology, its Games on Demand service requires an initial download for each game, and then the rest of the game is downloaded as you play through it.

As of this writing, 67 games are listed on Comcast's site, ranging from *Unreal Tournament* to *Clifford Phonics*, and the

"Games on Demand is a fun way for customers to increase the level of value and enjoyment they get from their broadband connection," explains Jen MacLean, director of sports, entertainment, and games for Comcast Online. "[The service] is also a great fit with the gaming-related content available on Comcast.net

"New Games on Demand content and games are added each month through Comcast's partnerships with best-in-class providers to provide a wide variety of exciting entertainment," MacLean says, "appealing to various customer interests. These will include AAA titles moving forward."

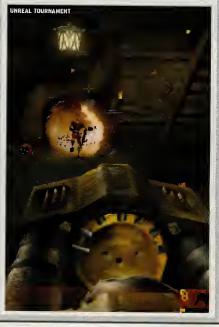
IS IT WORTH IT?

As part of preparing this story, we tried out Games on Demand and put it through its paces. By far the biggest challenge the service currently must overcome is a lack of available games. It has a few high-profile titles, such as *Neverwinter Nights: Shadows of Undrentide*, *Unreal Tournament*, *Temple of Elemental Evil*, and *Civilization III*, but that's pretty much it.

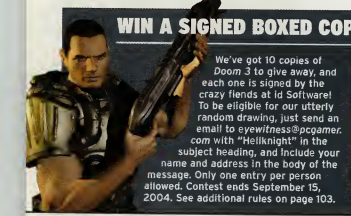
As far as accessing the games, downloading and playing is easy and straightforward. The initial download averaged around 300MB, and all of the games started up right away. However, there were instances where a game would freeze — particularly *Temple of Elemental Evil* — presumably while it was downloading the next section. And we were unable to get the multiplayer mode in *Unreal Tournament* to work, despite trying several different servers.

Also, the user interface needs to be redesigned. As it is right now, there's no way to quickly load a game that you've already played. Instead, you must go to the Games on Demand website and click the Play button next to the game, which adds an unnecessary step.

Like all services of this kind, it should constantly improve and evolve as time passes, and we expect Comcast to work out the kinks and bolster the available library of games. It could be worth your time to keep an eye on the site in the future to see how the service grows and expands. For more information about Games on Demand, head to *www.comcast.net/gamesondemand*.



WIN A SIGNED BOXED COPY OF DOOM 3!



We've got 10 copies of *Doom 3* to give away, and each one is signed by the crazy fiends at id Software! To be eligible for our utterly random drawing, just send an email to *eyewitness@pcgamer.com* with "Hellknight" in the subject heading, and include your name and address in the body of the message. Only one entry per person allowed. Contest ends September 15, 2004. See additional rules on page 103.

It's your lucky day!

Pick 12 CDs for the price of 1.

There's nothing more to buy ever, with membership.

Puddle Of Mudd: Life On Display (Flawless/Geffen) 51746

Maroon 5: Songs About Jane (J Records) 52367

Jessica Simpson: In This Skin (Columbia) 50986

Hoobastank: The Reason Title hit, more. (Island) 51849

Nickelback: The Long Road (Roadrunner) 51229

The Diary Of Alicia Keys (J Records) 51850

Jay-Z: The Black Album (Roc-A-Fella) 51721

OutKast: Speakerboxxx/ The Love Below (Arista) 506570

Beyoncé: Dangerously In Love (Columbia) 50215

Coldplay: A Rush Of Blood To The Head (Capitol) 45326

G-Unit: 50 Cent Is The Future (Interscope) 51653

Jet: Get Born (Elektra) 51272

The Black Eyed Peas: Elephunk (A&M) 48937

Yeah Yeah Yeahs: Fever To Tell (Interscope) 48322

Good Charlotte: The Young And The Hopeless (Epic) 45764

Isaac Hayes: Shaft/Extra. (Stax) 05101

The Very Best Of Thin Lizzy: Dedication (Mercury) 34828

The Very Best Of Scorpions: Bad For Good (Hip-O Records) 44640

Avril Lavigne: Let Go (Arista) 44805

Rob Zombie: Hellbilly Deluxe (Geffen) 25717

Nickelback: Curb (Roadrunner) 44853

Nelly: Nellyville (Universal) 44858

Linkin Park: Reanimation "Hybrid Theory" remixes. (Warner Bros.) 44694

The John Lennon Collection (Capitol) 73627

Poison: Greatest Hits 1986-1996 (Capitol) 18526

ZZ Top: Greatest Hits (Warner Bros.) 83411

Mana: Revolución de Amor (WEA Latina) 45248

Santana: Shaman (Arista) 49273

Korn: Follow The Leader (Immortal/Epic) 39228

The Very Best Of Kiss (UTV) 45363

Stone Sour (Roadrunner) 45370

Dr. Dre: The Chronic (Death Row) 45517

Snoop Dogg: Doggystyle (Death Row) 45520

Disturbed: Believe (Reprise) 45552

Keith Urban: Golden Road (Capitol Nashville) 45714

Rod Stewart: It Had To Be You... The Great American Songbook (J Records) 45776

Justin Timberlake: Justified (Jive) 45779

Christina Aguilera: Stripped (RCA) 45790

Elvis Presley: 30 #1 Hits (RCA) 45794

Faith Hill: Cry (Warner Bros.) 45975

The Best Of Alice Cooper: Mascara & Monsters (Rhino) 35320

Taproot: Welcome (Atlantic) 45904

Jason Mraz: Waiting For My Rocket To Come (Elektra) 45910

The Very Best Of Parliament: Funkad Up (Mercury) 46081

Phil Collins: Testify (Atlantic) 46092

Trapt (Warner Bros.) 46118

Matchbox Twenty: More Than You Think You Are (Atlantic) 46154

Snoop Dogg: Paid The Cost To Be Da Boss (Priority) 46187

System Of A Down: Steal This Album! (Columbia) 46166

3 Doors Down: Away From The Sun (Republic) 46190

Jennifer Lopez: This Is Me...Then (Epic) 46220

Mudvayne: The End Of All Things To Come (Epic) 46221

Coldplay: Parachutes (Nettwerk America) 39834

50 Cent: The New Breed (1 DVD/1 CD) (Interscope) 46540

Marilyn Manson: Holy Wood (Nothing/Interscope) 36851

Cheech & Chong: Where's Nasi (Epic) 46411

50 Cent: Get Rich Or Die Tryin' (Shady/Interscope) 46446

Jimi Hendrix: Band Of Gypsys (Capitol) 06280

Van Halen (Warner Bros.) 36951

The Very Best Of Eagles (Rhino) 51878

Motley Crüe: Greatest Hits (Hip-O Records) 46593

Dpath: Damnation (Koch Records) 46748

The Infinite Stevs Vai—An Anthology (Legacy) 51035

Fleetwood Mac: Say You Will (Reprise) 46942

Godsmack: Faceless (Republic) 46944

Fear Factory: Hatefiles (Roadrunner) 46948

Fugees: Greatest Hits (Columbia) 46952

AC/DC: Back In Black (Legacy) 46963

Rush: 2112 (Mercury) 19699

The Essential Cheap Trick (Legacy) 52446

Linkin Park: Hybrid Theory (Warner Bros.) 39183

The Doors (Elektra) 00209

Steely Dan: Everything Must Go (1 CD/1 DVD) (Reprise) 48695

Ruben Studdard: Soulful (J Records) 50659

The Ataris: So Long, Astoria (Columbia) 46023

N.E.R.D: In Search Of... (Virgin) 46148

Bruce Springsteen: Born In The U.S.A. (Columbia) 10063

Kelly Clarkson: Thankful (RCA) 48287

The Blues Brothers: The Definitive Collection (Atlantic) 43771

Lenny Kravitz: Greatest Hits (Virgin) 48497

Depeche: Two Angels And A Dream (Sirfan) 48696

Live: Birds Of Prey (Radioactive/MCA) 48622

Chimaira: The Impossibility Of Reason (Roadrunner) 48624

Jewel: 0304 (Atlantic) 48637

Kelis: Tasty (Arista) 51530

The Thorns (Columbia) 48637

Anita Lennox: Bare (J Records) 48726

Luther Vandross: Dance With My Father (J Records) 48727

Train: My Private Nation (Columbia) 48880

Type O Negative: Life Is Killing Me (Roadrunner) 48901

The Used: Maybe Memories (1 CD/1 DVD) (Reprise) 48796

Erykah Badu: Worldwide Underground (Motown) 48962

Michael McDonald: Motown (Motown) 48978

Ashanti: Chapter II (Murder Inc.) 48982

Creedence Clearwater Revival: Chronicle— 20 Greatest Hits (Fantasy) 01530

Hatebreed: The Rise Of Brutality (Universal) 51870

ABBA: Gold—Greatest Hits (Polydor) 20679

Staind: Dysfunction (Flip/Elektra) 30471

Gavin DeGraw: Chariot (J Records) 50049

Deep Purple: Machine Head (Deluxe Edition) Remastered, (Rhino) 26435

Lynyrd Skynyrd: Vicious Cycle (Sanctuary) 50063

Thalia (Virgin) 50074

Black Sabbath: Past Lives (Sanctuary) 45518

Brooks & Dunn: Red Dirt Road (Arista Nashville) 50176

Year Of The Rabbit (Elektra) 50193

Our Lady Peace: Live (Columbia) 50216

BMG MUSIC SERVICE

NO POSTAGE NECESSARY IF MAILED IN THE UNITED STATES

BUSINESS REPLY MAIL

FIRST-CLASS MAIL PERMIT NO. 5071 INDIANAPOLIS IN

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY ADDRESSEE

BMG MUSIC SERVICE
PO BOX 91001
INDIANAPOLIS IN 46209-9637

MS 771

Pick 12 CDs for the price of 1.

There's nothing more to buy ever, with membership.

Fefe Dobson (Def Jam) **51838**

Switchfoot: The Beautiful Letdown (Columbia) **50720**

Janet Jackson: Damita Jo (Virgin) ■ **52535**

Ludacris: Chicken-N-Beer (Def Jam South) ■ **51166**

Yellowcard: Ocean Avenue (Capitol) **50474**

School Of Rock/Sdtrk. (Atlantic) **52569**

Sen Kwellerr On My Way (RCA) **52451**

Korn: Take A Look In The Mirror (Epic) ■ 51631

Charlie's Angels: Full Throttle/Sdtrk. (Columbia) 52217

Three 6 Mafia: Da Unbreakables (Columbia) ■ 50218

Vendetta Red: Between The Never And The Now (Epic) 50251

Queensrÿche: Tribe (Sanctuary) 50295

Superjoint Ritual: A Lethal Dose Of American Hatred (Sanctuary) 50288

Alicia Keys: Songs In A Minor (J Records) 40907

Jena's Addiction: Strays (Capitol) 50470

Endo: Songs For The Restless (Columbia) ■ 50477

Manmade God (American) ■ 50511

Steadman: Revive (Elektra) 50518

Thrice: The Artist In The Ambulance (Island) 50527

Cool Chamber: Giving The Devil His Due (Roadrunner) ■ 50540

The Davis Trucks Band: Soul Serenade (Columbia) 50503

Prince: Purple Rain/Sdtrk. (Warner Bros.) ■ 50175

Adema: Unrelatable (Arista) ■ 50556

Clay Aiken: Measure Of A Man (RCA) 50660

The Star Spangles: Bazookatit (Capitol) 50717

Puddle Of Mudd: Come Clean (Flawless/Geffen) ■ 41188

Nappy Roots: Wooden Leather (Atlantic) ■ 50747

Lo-Pro (Geffen) 50757

Nick Lachey: Soul3 (Universal) 50766

Nas: Illmatic (Columbia) ■ 22154

Deerhoof Confidential: A Mark, A Mission, A Brand, A Scar (Vagrant) 50840

Andrew W.K.: The Wolf (Island) 50861

Slipknot: Iowa (Roadrunner) ■ 41204

Phantom Planet (Epic) 51964

Spineshank: Self-Destructive Pattern (Roadrunner) ■ 50873

Sean Paul: Dutty Rock (Reissue) (Atlantic) 50909

Liam Madden: Dance Of Death (Columbia) 50938

Josa Stone: The Soul Sessions (S-Curve) 50990

My Morning Jacket: It Still Moves (RCA) 51002

Skrape: Up The Dose (RCA) ■ 51003

John Mayer: Heavier Things (Aware/Columbia) 51063

Britney Spears: Britney (Jive) 41962

DMX: Grand Champ (Def Jam) ■ 51125

Dixie Trixx: Cheers (Shady/Interscope) ■ 51148

Ill Niño: Confession (Roadrunner) ■ 51177

Clutched 2001—The Second Millennium Live (Sanctuary) (Epic) ■ 41031

Galactic: Ruckus (Sanctuary) 51233

Murphy Lee: Murphy's Law (Def Jam) ■ 51244

System Of A Down: Toxicity (American) ■ 41700

Guns N' Roses: Appetite For Destruction (Geffen) ■ 70348

Pantera: Reinventing The Steel (EastWest) ■ 34468

The Essential Ozzy Osbourne (Legacy) ■ 46776

Static-X: Shadow Zone (Warner Bros.) 51314

Jenny Lang: Long Time Coming (A&M) 51327

Bad Company (Swan Song) 05830

P.O.D.: Satellite (Atlantic) 41793

Green Day: International Superhits! (Reprise) 41830

Pink: Missunderstood (Arista) 41864

Nelly: Da Derrty Versions—The Reinvention (Universal) ■ 52034

The Who: Who's Next (MCA) 13215

Wyclef Jean: The Preacher's Son Ni/Miss Elliott, more. (J Records) 51405

Baby Bash: The Smokin' Nephew (Universal) ■ 51424

Tenacious D (Epic) ■ 41897

Soundgarden: A-Sides (A&M) 24607

Rabo McEntire: Room To Breathe (MCA Nashville) 51547

The Thrills: So Much For The City (Virgin) 51566

Steppenwolf: 16 Greatest Hits (MCA) 13453

3 Doors Down: Another 700 Miles (EP) Six live tracks. (Republic) 51665

Stone Temple Pilots: Thank You (Atlantic) 51681

Missy Elliott: This Is Not A Test (Elektra) ■ 51849

Nine Inch Nails: Live—And All That Could Have Been (Nothing) ■ 42161

Counting Crows: Films About Ghosts—The Best Of... (Geffen) 51748

Ja Rule: Blood In My Eye (Def Jam) ■ 51787

Musiq: Soulstar (Def Soul) 51756

Memphis Bleek: M.A.D.E. (Universal) ■ 51907

Elephant Man: Good 2 Go (Atlantic) ■ 51823

Rage Against The Machine: Live At The Grand Olympic Auditorium (Epic) ■ 51633

Alan Jackson: Drive (Arista Nashville) 42369

The Best Of Cher: The Millennium Collection, Vol. 2 (Rip-O Records) 51912

Josh Groban (Warner Bros.) 42384

Damageplan: New Found Power (Elektra) ■ 51962

Pink: Try This (Arista) ■ 52173

Five For Fighting: The Battle For Everything (Aware/Columbia) 52040

Blindside: About A Burning Fire (Elektra) 52219

The Coral: Magic And Medicine (Columbia) 52273

Solt: re.da.fine (J Records) 52281

Keri Noble: Fearless (Manhattan) 52332

Cross Canadian Ragweed: Soul Gravy Volume: Live Ann Womack. (Universal South) 52349

Air: Talkie Walkie (Astralwerks) 52385

Selena: Momentos Intimos (EMI Latin) 52405

The Wiggles: Yummy Yummy (Koch Records) 52498

B2K: Greatest Hits (Epic) 52514

Soulfly: Prophecy (Roadrunner) ■ 52560

Cypress Hill: Till Death Do Us Part (Columbia) ■ 52596

Kenny Chesney: No Shoes, No Shirt, No Problems (BNA) 43195

Aerosmith: Big Ones '90s-'00s hits. (Geffen) 06271

'NSYNC: Celebrity (Jive) 40992

Jessica Simpson: Irresistible (Columbia) 40784

Esmon: I Don't Want You Back (Jive) ■ 52413

Jay-Z: The Blueprint (Roc-A-Fella) ■ 41440

Drive-By Truckers: Southern Rock Opera (Lost Highway) ★ 44542

Run-DMC: Greatest Hits (Arista/BMG Heritage) 45587

Bond: Shine Music of Atkinori, Piazzolla, Led Zeppelin, Dvorak 45905

Blu Cantrell: Bittersweet (Arista) 46720

Lil' Kim: La Bella Mafia (Atlantic) ■ 46576

John Mayer: Any Given Thursday Live (Columbia) ★ 48042

Less Than Jake: Anthem (Warner Bros.) 48454

Michael Jackson: Number Ones (Epic) 51830

Lostprophets: The Fake Sound Of Progress (Columbia) 42208

Young Guns: Tough Luv (Roc-A-Fella) ■ 52158

M.E.R.D. Fly Or Die (Virgin) ■ 52431

Los Lonely Boys (Epic) 52598

Nas: Illmatic 10th Anniversary Platinum Edition (Columbia) ■ 52506

HOW CLUB MEMBERSHIP WORKS

1. CHOOSE 3 CDs RIGHT AWAY — FREE!
2. THEN BUY 1 CD WITHIN THE NEXT 12 MONTHS.
3. YOU GET 8 MORE CDs — FREE!

That's 12 CDs for the price of 1.

A shipping and handling charge will be added to each selection.

A Great Deal. Enjoy terrific savings, free music and more! You'll start with 3 FREE CDs now, and pick the rest later from over 14,000 titles! You'll get a total of 12 CDs for the price of 1—and no more commitments, ever! A shipping and handling charge will be added to each selection.

10-Day, Risk-Free Listening. When you receive your FREE selections, preview them and examine the terms of Club membership for 10 days. If you're not completely satisfied for any reason, return your free selections at our expense. There's no further obligation.

Thousands Of Selections. As a new member, about every three weeks (17 times a year) you'll receive a BMG Music Service magazine. There you'll get to choose from thousands of selections—everything from classic hits to the hottest superstars—along with music news and recommendations from our editors.

The Choice Is Always Yours. In your exclusive Club magazine, you'll always find a Featured Selection just for you. If you want it, don't do a thing; you'll receive it automatically. If you don't want it, return the Reply Card by the date specified. You'll always have 10 days to decide. If you have less time and receive an unwanted Featured Selection, return it at our expense and we will credit your account. You may cancel your membership at any time, once you've purchased your one regular Club price selection ($14.98 and up).

Save Now, Save Later. Start saving with our outstanding introductory offer; keep saving the longer you're a member with discounts up to 70%, clearance CDs as low as $2.99 and the chance to get even more FREE selections. At BMG Music Service you'll always get the best value.

Reply Card Missing? Please write to: BMG Music Service, PO Box 91001, Indianapolis, IN 46291-0002

Parental Advisory—Contains explicit lyrics and/or artwork.
★ 2-CD set (counts as 2 selections).

BMG Music Service, 6550 E 30th Street, Indianapolis, IN 46219-1194
Trademarks used in this advertisement are the property of various trademark owners
© 2004 BMGMusic

MS 771

CHOOSE YOUR FREE CDs! SEND NO MONEY NOW.

YES! I'd like to join BMG Music Service. Please send my 3 FREE selections now. I will then buy 1 selection at the regular Club price within a year and choose 8 more selections FREE. **That's 12 CDs for the price of 1, with nothing more to buy, ever!** A shipping and handling charge will be added to each selection.

1. RUSH me those 3 hits now (indicate by number):

★ 2-CD set (counts as 2 selections)

2. I've checked the **one** music category I like best (but I can change my mind at any time).

VG

- ☐ (42) TOP 40 Justin Timberlake, Pink
- ☐ (32) ADULT CONTEMPORARY Mariah Carey, Sheryl Crow
- ☐ (40) MODERN ROCK Linkin Park, Good Charlotte
- ☐ (31) CLASSIC ROCK The Who, Fleetwood Mac
- ☐ (38) METAL Ozzy Osbourne, Iron Maiden
- ☐ (50) ADULT ALTERNATIVE Dido Costello, Lucinda Williams
- ☐ (34) COUNTRY Alan Jackson, Martina McBride
- ☐ (39) R&B Luther Vandross, R. Kelly
- ☐ (41) HIP-HOP Jay-Z, 50 Cent
- ☐ (33) LIGHT & EASY Frank Sinatra, Barry Manilow
- ☐ (37) JAZZ Diana Krall, Miles Davis
- ☐ (35) CLASSICAL Yo-Yo Ma, Renée Fleming
- ☐ (46) LATIN Shakira, Marc Anthony
- ☐ (36) CHRISTIAN Michael W. Smith, Third Day
- ☐ (44) GOSPEL Kirk Franklin, Yolanda Adams

3.
☐ Mr.
☐ Ms.
(PLEASE PRINT) First Name Initial Last Name

Address Apt.

City ( ) State Zip

Phone Area Code

(5) E-mail Address: example: jdoe@bmg.com

BMG Music Service reserves the right to request additional information, reject any application or cancel any membership. Local taxes, if any, will be added. Late charges will be added to past-due bills. Offer available in continental USA and under special arrangement in Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, U.S.V.I., APO and FPO.

PJ2ED

CHOOSE FROM OVER 14,000 TITLES!

At last, the chance to re-enact all of France's 20th-century military victories...oh wait.

MAKE YOUR OWN HISTORY ON THE PC

New simulations let students learn by playing

There's no question that students will show more enthusiasm for playing games than they will for doing their history homework. But what if the two were combined and you could take control of a famous world leader and try your hand at altering the course of world history, all while learning valuable information?

That's exactly what Massachusetts-based Muzzy Lane Software is doing with its first game, *Making History*, which is designed specifically as a learning tool targeted at students in high-school and college courses.

As part of the development process for *Making History*, Muzzy Lane asked teachers and professors around the country to tell the company what students *must* learn from a history class. The response was that students should learn and understand the motivations of world leaders more than the simple memorization of names and dates of people and events. Muzzy Lane sees this goal as something that a simulation game can accomplish better than any textbook.

Defend your borders!

"We try to have one foot firmly planted in the gaming world and one in the educational world, to come up with something that's both engaging and educational," says Muzzy Lane VP Nick DeKanter.

Toward that end, students are placed in the shoes of a nation's leader and surrounded by advisors that offer economic, diplomatic, and military pointers based on the sometimes-biased thinking of a particular country at a particular time.

The simultaneous turn-based scenarios can be played in single- or multiplayer modes and are designed to last around 45 minutes. Having shorter games, DeKanter believes, will encourage instructors to use them in class or assign them as homework.

The first iteration of *Making History* puts students in control of a European country from 1930 to 1945. If you like, you can take control of England and launch a pre-emptive invasion of Germany, but you'll have to live with the consequences. For example, your warmongering ways could make the British people turn against you, in which case you'd be voted out of office (though you'd have prevented Hitler's rise to power). Muzzy Lane is already planning *Birth of a Nation*, which will cover 1750-1800 in North America.

DeKanter says the reaction in the teaching community has been overwhelmingly positive. "Some people approach you somewhat skeptical about it, but once they realize that it's not just a little gimmick, they get very, very excited," he tells us.

Making History will be available to both instructors and the general public this fall via Muzzy Lane's website (*www.muzzylane.com*).

D.J.'s RELEASE METER

Your source for the most accurate release dates

Hi, I'm D.J., and I'll be your new...Release Meter...guy. Remember to tip generously. These release dates are as accurate as possible, but as we all know, publishers like to shuffle dates around for the sheer enjoyment of watching us squirm. If you know something I don't (and let's face it, most people do), email me at *dj@pcgamer.com*.

SEPTEMBER 2004

TITLE	PUBLISHER	DATE
Anarchy Online: Alien Invasion	Funcom	09/01/04
Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth	Bethesda	09/01/04
Origin of the Species	Tri Synergy	09/01/04
Fairly Odd Parents	THQ	09/06/04
Armies of Exigo	EA	09/07/04
Madden NFL 2005	EA	09/07/04
Saga of Ryzom	Tri Synergy	09/07/04
Full Spectrum Warrior	THQ	09/14/04
S.T.A.L.K.E.R.	THQ	09/14/04
Warhammer 40,000: Dawn of War	THQ	09/14/04
Rome: Total War	Activision	09/14/04
The Sims 2	EA	09/17/04
Medal of Honor: Pacific Assault	EA	09/20/04
Driver 3	Atari	09/20/04
Shark Tale	Activision	09/20/04
Star Wars: Battlefront	LucasArts	09/21/04
Myst IV: Revelation	Ubisoft	09/21/04
Silent Hunter III	Ubisoft	09/21/04
Tiger Woods 2005	EA	09/22/04
Evil Genius	Vivendi	09/28/04
Atlantis Evolution	DreamCatcher	09/29/04

OCTOBER 2004

TITLE	PUBLISHER	DATE
Call of Duty: United Offensive	Activision	10/04/04
The Incredibles	THQ	10/04/04
Pacific Fighters	Ubisoft	10/04/04
Brothers in Arms	Ubisoft	10/04/04
Pariah	Groove Games	10/04/04
Snowblind	Eidos	10/04/04
Tony Hawk's Underground 2	Activision	10/05/04
Shadow Ops: Red Mercury Rising	Atari	10/05/04
Superpower 2	DreamCatcher	10/06/04
Middle-Earth Online	Vivendi	10/11/04
The Matrix Online	Sega	10/11/04
FIFA Soccer 2005	EA	10/12/04
Vampire: The Masquerade Bloodlines	Activision	10/12/04
Dungeon Lords	DreamCatcher	10/13/04
EverQuest II	Sony Online	10/25/04
Half-Life 2	Vivendi	Fall

WARNING:
Some spoilers ahead! If you don't want to know *any* of the secrets of *Doom 3*, read at your own risk.

GENRE First-Person Shooter **DEVELOPER** id Software **PUBLISHER** Activision **REQUIRED** P4 1.5GHz or equivalent, 384MB RAM, 64MB 3D card (certain GPUs — lowest is GeForce3/GeForce4 MX) **WE RECOMMEND** 2GHz CPU, 512MB RAM, RADEON 9800 card, five-channel sound card and speakers **MAXIMUM PLAYERS** 4 **ESRB RATING** M

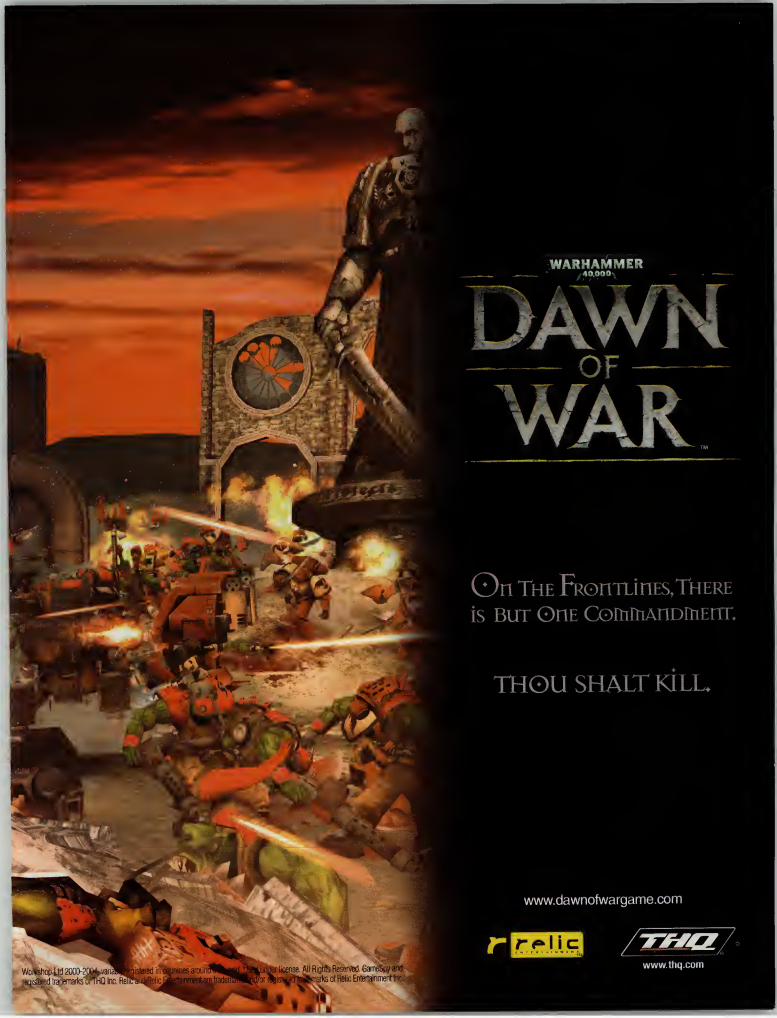
DOOM 3

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

THE WORLD-EXCLUSIVE FIRST REVIEW

YOU'VE WAITED YEARS. NOW THE WAIT IS OVER. PC GAMER WAS THE ONLY PUBLICATION IN THE WORLD TO REVIEW DOOM 3 A SPLIT-SECOND AFTER ID DECLARED IT "DONE." WE THOUGHT WE WERE READY...

© Copyright Games Workshop Limited 2004. Dawn of War, Dawn of War logo, GW, GW logo, Games Workshop, Warhammer, Warhammer 40,000 Device, and all associated names, insignia, races and images are either ®, ™ and/or © Games Workshop Ltd. 2000-2004. "Powered by GameSpy" and the "Powered by GameSpy" design are trademarks of GameSpy Industries, Inc. All rights reserved. Alienware and the Alienware logo are registered trademarks and trademarks of Alienware Corporation. THQ and the THQ logo are trademarks and/or



Workshop Ltd 2000-2004, variably registered in countries around the world. Used under license. All Rights Reserved. Games Workshop, and registered trademarks of THQ Inc. Relic Entertainment are trademarks of Relic Entertainment Inc.

Your assault rifle keeps a running ammo count — and it's never enough.

Turn out the lights. Get the surround-sound speakers in place. And say goodbye to sanity for the next 20-odd hours. The guys at id Software are famous for delivering a game "when it's done" — and we're here to tell you that *Doom 3* is not only done, it's mind-blowing.

The game opens up with your arrival at the Mars Research Facility of the massive United Aerospace Corporation. It's the year 2145, and you're a Marine newly assigned to the facility's security detail. For the first 15 minutes, you're not even issued a weapon — the action unfolds in a pace reminiscent of the opening of *Half-Life*, as you get oriented around the security building and watch some video primers on your new job and new home.

In this opening act, you're familiarized with your Personal Digital Assistant, which will be your invaluable interface throughout the rest of the game. Using this handy gadget, you can download info from other people's PDAs as you come across them, adding codes, access keys, and emails that contain crucial information you'll need to progress through the 28 maps to follow.

Here's what you really spend these first 15 minutes doing: gawking. This is your chance to absorb the full shock of a magnificent graphics engine put to stunning use. The environments are huge-scale and packed with detail. The base is a thoroughly convincing Mars station — less a far-future design than a depressingly postmodern corporate park. It feels lived-in, too — from the skin mags scattered on the kitchenette tables to the nastiness in the public-restroom toilet bowls.

But no sooner do you get oriented with your gear — and with the very cool physics model that lets you rearrange just about any object in the place — then all hell breaks loose. Literally.

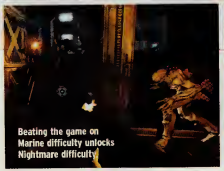
The base is hammered by a shockwave of satanic force, and immediately you discover that almost everyone around you has been turned into a flesh-eating zombie — with a mindless devotion to snacking on you. Worse yet, the base has been invaded by a horde of nightmarish demons. Cut off from your fellow Marines (and stalked by

INVENTING DEATHMATCH

Doom introduced us to deathmatch, and *Doom 3* takes us back to it. Where other shooters have evolved multiplayer contests in different ways, *Doom 3*'s multiplay hearkens back to a simpler time. Deathmatch, team deathmatch, tournament (one on one), and last man standing are the available modes; each supports up to four players, and five maps are provided.

Included among them is Edge2, a *Doom 3*-engine remake of the brilliant *Quake II* deathmatch map The Edge. You just *know* it's going to be the four-player DM map of choice right after the game's ships.

Though controversial, id's decision not to include more modes and maps will no doubt be solved by the mod community within a few weeks of the game's release.



Beating the game on Marine difficulty unlocks Nightmare difficulty.

Zombie trapped in cell. Must... eat...brains.

Science...meet religion.

This Archvile's about to taste some BFG 9000.

some of their well-armed zombie versions!), you've got only a comm-link with your still-human Sarge to steer you to safety.

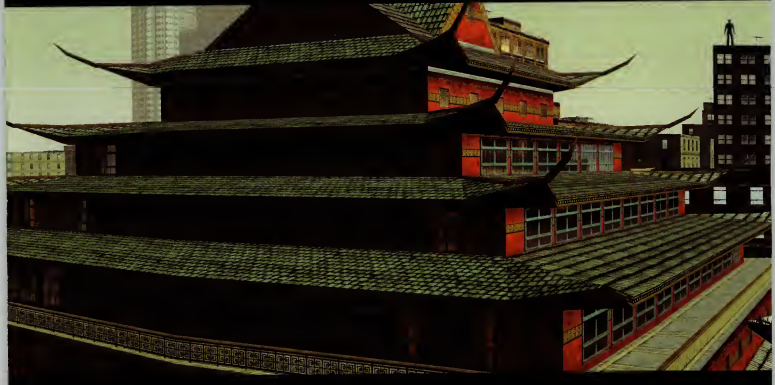
DOOM AND THEN SOME

For those expecting nothing more than "classic" run-and-gun *Doom* gameplay, the biggest surprise may be just how *substantial* this game is. If you try to blaze through any of these 28 missions, you *will* be humiliated. Instead, the only route to success is a slow and steady one, sticking to shadows, searching every nook and cranny of each level for ammo, health, and access keys, and generally advancing as methodically as you can.

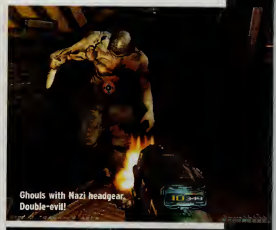
You've also got to figure out what's happening. As you make your way through the different levels of the base, the plot is revealed via the PDAs you pick up, and in brief conversations with the few NPCs who weren't "turned" by the satanic attack. To make your way through the inevitably sealed-off access doors between levels, you'll have to read through email that progressively reveals a conspiracy of apocalyptic proportions — the nefarious scheme of psychotic Dr. Betruger, UAC's chief scientist, who's perverted a teleportation experiment to open up a portal into a hell-like dimension. (Oh, and as if you couldn't guess, Dr. Betruger is also keen on transporting his hellion army to Earth.)

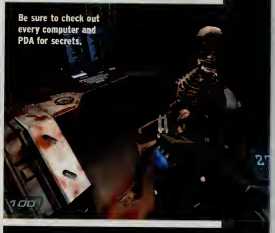
Gear is at an absolute premium. All the old *Doom* weapons are back, but preciously rationed, and with an ever-dwindling supply of ammo for each. The shotgun is your basic in-close sledgehammer, while the assault rifle is your best bet for down-hallway exchanges with armed Zomble Marines. The chaingun provides a heavy punch for those hectic occasions when you need to yell "Let's rockkkkk!" The plasma rifle was my personal fave, dealing streams of fiery blue death, although it runs out of ammo quickly. The rocket launcher scores devastating hits at a distance, while the stock pistol is suitable only for minor enemies and desperate last stands. (And as for the BFG 9000 — you'll have to wait a bit before you get to arm it, but the wait is well worth it.)

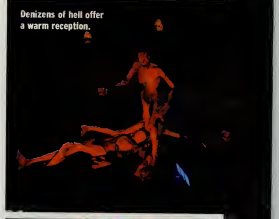
You're in control of your own life, remember? >

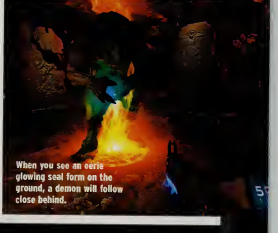


You can shoot incoming rockets, but chances are, you'll eat more than a few anyway.


Ghouls with Nazi headgear. Double-evil!


Be sure to check out every computer and PDA for secrets.


Denizens of hell offer a warm reception.


When you see an eerie glowing seal form on the ground, a demon will follow close behind.

But there's no need to worry that *Doom 3* is as slow as *Splinter Cell* — hardly a minute goes by without a furious exchange of hostilities with some manner of demonic beastie. Imps, Hellknights, and Archviles are all back to shock and awe you with viscerally jarring attacks, and the endless stream of zombies and scuttling nasties gives you plenty to chew on (and chew up). The gallery of grotesquerie is the product of an almost limitless imagination for horrors — spiders that make your flesh crawl, infant "cherubs" mutated with fly wings, and other unnamable terrors that blight the corridors of the possessed base.

TO LAUNCH A THOUSAND PC PURCHASES

Early in the game, you're tasked with sprinting outside the Mars facility (breathing with rapidly depleting air canisters) in search of the next airlock. It was here that I really started to notice that what I was seeing was graphics superiority that not even current hot-tech showcases like *Far Cry* could match. Dust blew across the Martian surface and the dull brown/red hue of the sand and the twisted metal of shredded structures all seemed so perfectly plausible.

Each girder, door, and window adds tangible substance to each scene, and even the effect of your flashlight shining into darkened corners looks ridiculously real — as the light floods through a room, swinging back and forth, shadows are cast perfectly; dust particles gently drift into the cone of the flashlight, eerily visible. And these are just the basics of the environment: just wait until you enter the depths of hell, and dive into some of the later mass melees. *Doom 3*, with all due awareness of hyperbole, is the best-looking game you've ever seen.

Not surprisingly, you'll need a monster system to render these monsters in all their intricately textured glory. But the ability to play *Doom 3* with all its visual magic maxed-out is a really good excuse to trade up. A P4 3GHz with a GeForce 5950-class card will see you through okay. One of our test systems had a GeForce 6800 and ran flawlessly at 1024x768 resolution with high detail. (A higher level of quality and resolution is available, but the PC to run it well isn't!) Even running with a GeForce4 MX card and 512MB RAM, the texture detail was great, although the game was noticeably choppier in spots.

Bottom line: If *Far Cry* didn't convince you, then *Doom 3* should — the time to upgrade to a next-generation 3D chip, or even an all-new rig, is now.

SOUND, FURY...AND SCARES

While I was expecting amazing graphics, it was the sound effects and sound design that had me reeling. Footsteps echo spookily down halls; monsters issue bloodcurdling shrieks; every hallway has an audible drip of menace and dread. *Doom 3* is the reason to own 5.1 (or better) surround speakers. The collective impact of sound design on the whole experience can't be overstated, adding to the urge to switch out all the lights, close the curtains, crank up the volume, and let yourself be scared shitless.

>thematrixonline.com

THE MATRIX ONLINE

>No one can be told what the Matrix is, you have to see it for yourself.

See it sooner when you pre-order today.

Pre-order *The Matrix Online* and you will be granted access to the Matrix before the rest of the world. In addition, you'll receive access to *The Matrix Online* beta and an exclusive Matrix ability or game item. Just visit www.thematrixonline.com for details. Then get ready to take an active role in the continuing saga of The Matrix trilogy.

SEGA® MONOLITH™ ATI™

RATING PENDING RP RATING PENDING ESRB Visit www.esrb.org for updated rating information.

Sega is registered in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. SEGA and the Sega logo are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Sega Corporation. TM and © Warner Bros. Entertainment. All Rights Reserved. Developed by Monolith Productions, Inc. MONOLITH and the Monolith logo are trademarks of and © Monolith Productions, Inc. THE MATRIX ONLINE, characters, names and all related indicia are trademarks of and © Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc. 2004

SOULCUBE

The new weapon in the *Doom* arsenal is the Soulcube, and it's a doozy. After grabbing it roughly halfway through the game, make sure it's bound to a key you can access quickly. Whenever you've killed five monsters by conventional means, the Soulcube activates. Whispering to be unleashed, it can be used to kill an enemy instantly, replenishing your health with the health of the creature it slays.

You get an icon and an audio hint that the cube is ready for use, so you know what to do even in the middle of a huge battle. Tactically, save this weapon for when you really need it, or just keep using and replenishing it. Effective use of the Soulcube is the key to living through many frantic firefights.

And you *will* be jolted right out of your seat. I'm not going to spoil any of the shocks here, but there were at least four occasions where I *lunged* back in my chair. Lead designer Tim Willits is inside your head like a psychologist — and just when he's let you think you can lower your guard, he sticks the psychic shiv right into your nervous system.

Even when the scares aren't heart-stopping, there's a constant, simmering anxiety at each and every step. You're basically subjecting yourself to a 20-hour cardiac episode. At times, death brought sweet, momentary respite from the fear-drenched mayhem.

The zombie-plagued space station is creepy enough, but about midway through the game, you make a teleporter-aided detour to hell. The whole feel of the game changes utterly — if you thought you were in desperate straits before, you now find yourself in a balls-shriveling nightmare netherworld. (With no weapons!)

It's all leading up to a knees-knocking climactic spelunk into the archaeological ruins beneath the Mars base, where you enter a final showdown with the evildoers amid the remnants of a fallen Martian civilization. As the massive freight-lifter descends oh-so-agonizingly-slowly into the darkness, you may find yourself, as I did, cursing out loud at the grim hold this game has on you.

Does *Doom 3* have any missteps? Maybe just this one: Its attempts at humor feel *waaay* out of place. There are a few lame running gags: PDA spam and an *uber*-nerdy string of emails between members of a roleplaying club. (The spam gag actually becomes a puzzle that requires you to jump *out* of the game and use your web browser to find a code. Huh?) In one appalling instance, you even become privy to a tongue-in-cheek directive by archvillain Dr. Betruger, advising his hellions on the proper way to prepare virgin sacrifices. These limp jokes served only to dump me out of the game's carefully calibrated dread machine.

But no matter: The rest is all dynamite. *Doom 3* took me 23 hours to complete on the medium difficulty setting. (For all those who rumored that the game would be over in a few hours — you couldn't be more wrong.) And for those 23 hours, you will never experience a dull moment. Or even a less-than-mesmerizing one. *Doom 3* is a masterpiece of the art form — staying true to the frantic legacy of the *Doom* series, while ambitiously reaching new heights and bashing down the doors of the next generation of PC shooter. The bar is raised. Let's see someone else climb over it. — *Dan Morris*

That's just wrong.

PC GAMER | FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS Extraordinary graphics and sound; incredible tension, atmosphere, and mayhem.

LOWS Some stabs at humor fall a bit flat.

BOTTOM LINE Just as we'd hoped, it's a non-stop ride of tension, carnage, and terror. A new classic.

94%

EDITORS' CHOICE

WHOEVER
WINS...
WE
LOSE.
AVP
ALIEN VS. PREDATOR
08.13.04
www.avp-movie.com

CRASHING! BOMBING! NUKING!

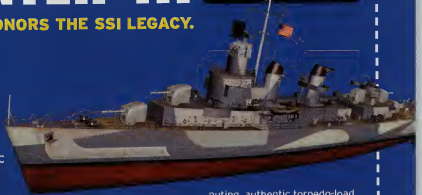
ANDY MAHOOD RACES, FLIES, AND DIVES AROUND THE WORLD TO CRASH-TEST THE NEXT WAVE OF REALISTIC SIMS

PC GAMER EXCLUSIVE

LEFT: The weapons and explosion pyrotechnics are consistently spectacular. TOP: An "event camera" inset window pops up whenever anything significant occurs. MIDDLE: The game features four sub types, and each is a formidable weapons platform. BOTTOM: Fend off air attacks with a 20mm deck gun or flak gun.

SILENT HUNTER III

FIRST STOP: ROMANIA. UBISOFT HONORS THE SSI LEGACY.



Submarine simulations are rare these days, and sub-sim *franchises* even rarer. This makes it doubly gratifying to see *Silent Hunter III* — the third installment in the venerable WWII sub series — nearing completion. The game was a standout at this year's E3, and we were delighted to get hands-on time with an early preview build.

Ubisoft Romania has assumed the development chores from Ultimation, and they've worked some cinematic magic on the series. *Silent Hunter III* boasts the most eye-popping visuals the naval-simulation genre has ever witnessed. All the crewmen are rendered and animated in full 3D, and every one of these guys looks appropriately haggard and even a little terrified to be locked away in a creaking metal tube surrounded by pissed-off Allied destroyers.

DEVELOPER: UBISOFT ROMANIA
PUBLISHER: UBISOFT
RELEASE DATE: Q3 2004

The vibrant water and dynamic weather are absolutely gob-smacking, with the most realistic-looking waves, whitecaps, and water effects in any PC game. Even the periscope lens is affected by cool, vision-obscuring waves.

These stellar graphics extend to the damage modeling and weapons pyrotechnics. Downed ships break apart realistically and sink by the head, stern, or wherever your torpedo hits home. The resultant secondary explosions — especially when an oil bunker or ammo magazine is hit — are reminiscent of a big-budget Jerry Bruckheimer movie.

In a welcome departure from the scripted "play-it-until-you-get-it-right" campaign offerings in *Silent Hunter II, SH III* will feature a branching, nonlinear career mode with some dynamic elements tossed in to keep each mission fresh. The game will also include a full mission editor and a selection of solo historical missions, but a multiplayer option has yet to be confirmed (the campaign and editor weren't available for preview).

Our test build started us off in the thick of the action and featured "homing" torpedoes that possess an uncanny level of accuracy, even when shots are fired from obscure gyro angles. A hardcore mode with manual torpedo-solution computing, authentic torpedo-load times, and a true silent-running mode (plus a "sea roaming" system comparable to that in the original *Silent Hunter*) will ship with the finished game. The enemy AI isn't fully polished yet — no evasive maneuvering was evident, for example — but this aspect should also be addressed in the final release.

With its staggeringly beautiful graphics, detailed crew-management options, and promising new campaign engine, *Silent Hunter III* should be a spectacular new addition to the all-too-sparse naval-sim library when it surfaces later this fall.

Intense dogfighting action (and the explosive consequences) is still at the heart of this World War II combat sim.

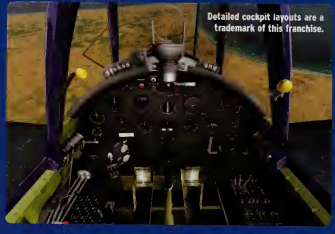
PACIFIC FIGHTERS

IL-2 STURMOVIK TRADES STALINGRAD FOR SINGAPORE

DEVELOPER: 1C
PUBLISHER: UBISOFT
RELEASE DATE: NOVEMBER 2004

Ubisoft's *IL-2* series has dominated the PC flight-combat skies since 2001, and this trend looks set to continue with *Pacific Fighters*, the latest chapter in Oleg Maddox's critically acclaimed World War II prop-sim franchise.

As the name suggests, *Pacific Fighters* transplants the series from the snowy expanses of Eastern Europe to the fierce island-hopping and carrier-based action of the Pacific theater. Russian Yaks and German Focke Wulfs give way to American Hellcats and Japanese Zeros in the franchise's most significant overhaul yet. Flight simmers can participate in famous air battles at Pearl Harbor, Midway, Okinawa, and Singapore while flying for the U.S., Japan, Great Britain, and Australia. In all, 16 maps and over 40 flyable aircraft are included, ranging from nimble fighters like the F4U Corsair to lumbering, multi-station bombers like the B-25 Mitchell and G4M "Betty."



Detailed cockpit layouts are a trademark of this franchise.

The naval angle should add an interesting wrinkle to the series. Carrier take-offs and landings will factor heavily into the action, and the game's dynamic campaign engine (first introduced in *IL-2: Forgotten Battles*) will receive some significant tweaks as a result.

"We're trying to make our campaigns more involving," explains Producer Ilya Shevchenko, who maintains that *Pacific Fighters*' working carriers and historic squadrons will add a more connected, continuous feel to the new mission types. "Our dynamic campaign engine will have multiple customizable settings for air and ground intensity, which will allow players to fine-tune the campaign gameplay to their own setup."

A significant graphics upgrade — with new cloud effects and animated, weather-affected water — is also in the cards to accommodate the vast oceanic environments. "In clear weather you'll see very calm seas with occasional lazy waves, and in worse weather we'll have rolling waves with whitecaps," Shevchenko tells us. "Carrier decks will also pitch and roll in rough seas, so landings will be especially hairy."

It's too early to say if the dev team will offer newbies any relief on the learning curve. (The aircraft physics in the group's first few releases were a bitch to master, even at the lowest difficulty settings.) A fix for the sim's random stutters is also high on the wishlist for *IL-2* vets.

Perhaps the biggest downside to the original *IL-2* sims — in the eyes of American gamers, anyway — was the absence of U.S. planes and squadrons. Whatever else it offers come November, *Pacific Fighters* will kick the crap out of that complaint once and for all.

rFACTOR

EA'S FINEST RACING TEAM GOES INDEPENDENT

Image Space Inc. has been rolling out quality PC racing simulations for years — from 1999's *Sports Car GT* to last year's *F1 Challenge '99-'02*. The Michigan-based developer recently branched away from longtime publishing partner EA Sports to develop its own vision of the "ultimate racing sim." Enter *rFactor*, ISI's first installment incorporating this bold new concept.

"Our first racing experience for *rFactor* will be a mixed-class circuit road racer," says ISI VP Gjon Camaj. Servicing a target audience of PC race-sim aficionados, car enthusiasts, full-time racers, and even professional racing schools, *rFactor* will be available either via online download or at retail.

DEVELOPER: IMAGE SPACE INC.
PUBLISHER: TBA
RELEASE DATE: LATE FALL 2004

Fully detailed cockpit views will accentuate the driving experience.

Though a publishing partner had yet to be confirmed (and car and track licensing are still ongoing), *rFactor* is only months away from completion. Like most racing fans, I've been mightily impressed with ISI's previous work, and the prospect of driving small sedans, powerful GT machines, and even formula cars has my throttle foot all a-twitter.

Factor in those tantalizing "racing-school realism" claims from the dev team, and *rFactor* could well be the PC racer to beat when it ships this fall.

NASCAR 2005

With 30 licensed tracks (including Milwaukee and IRP), improved physics, aggressive "3-wide" AI, full-field (43-car) online racing, advanced DirectX 9.0b graphics features, and a deep new career mode (with multiple classes) already on the drawing board, EA looks to have a worthy successor to the much-loved *NASCAR Racing 2003*. So just how realistic will the new sim be? "Better than anything that we or any other developer has ever created," confidently proclaims Producer James Hawkins. We'll find out in February 2005.

PT BOATS: KNIGHTS OF THE SEA

PT CRUISERS, RUSSIAN-STYLE

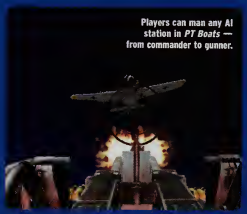
Traditional PC naval simulations usually place you on the bridge of a 2,100-ton Fletcher-class destroyer or behind the periscope of a billion-dollar nuclear attack sub. That premise is downsized somewhat in *PT Boats: Knights of the Sea*, a new combat marine sim from 1C/Maddox and Akella in which you control a fleet of Allied, Soviet, or German PT Boats during the height of World War II.

DEVELOPER: AKELLA/1C COMPANY
PUBLISHER: 1C COMPANY
RELEASE DATE: 01/02 2005

PT Boats purports to offer a historically accurate simulation of North Atlantic Mosquito fleet engagements with a "new level of realism" for ship physics and damage modeling. You can assume hands-on control of any crew position — from gunner to commander — as your boys shoot down enemy aircraft and torpedo convoys, and generally make unwelcome pests of themselves on the high seas. Augmenting *PT Boats*' single missions and career-based campaigns will be an online component with support for up to 16 players.

An upgraded version of Akella's STORM game engine (last used in 2003's *Pirates of the Caribbean*) has been tweaked to deliver improved 3D water quality and new effects such as explosion-induced waves. 1C's internal development studio is also providing aircraft models from its *IL-2 Sturmovik* flight-sim line, so *PT Boats* is already looking damned impressive on the visual front.

PT Boats: Knights of the Sea will begin sea trials in early 2005.

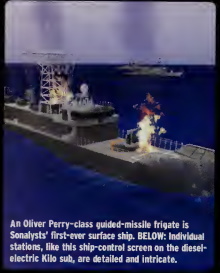


Players can man any AI station in *PT Boats* — from commander to gunner.

Akella's upgraded STORM game engine should enhance the maritime graphics significantly.

DANGEROUS WATERS

SONALYSTS GOES MULTI-VESSEL



An Oliver Perry-class guided-missile frigate is Sonalysts' first-ever surface ship. BELOW: Individual stations, like this ship-control screen on the diesel-electric Kilo sub, are detailed and intricate.

Anyone who's played *Jane's 688(I) Hunter/Killer*, *Fleet Command*, or *Sub Command* is already on a first-name basis with Sonalysts Combat Simulations. The *Jane's* label may be long gone, but when *Dangerous Waters* launches later this year, Sonalysts should steam ahead as the PC's pre-eminent naval-sim developer.

Dangerous Waters is a high-fidelity simulation, featuring seven driveable naval "platforms." Four are submarines (the 688i, Akula, Seawolf, and diesel-electric Kilo); two are anti-sub aircraft (the MH-60 Seahawk helo and the P-3C Orion reconnaissance plane); and rounding out the list is Sonalysts' first surface ship, an Oliver Perry-class guided-missile frigate.

Despite this impressive cross-section of naval firepower, *Dangerous Waters* isn't a survey sim, at least not in the traditional sense. The offered craft are individually modeled, and each boasts complex physics suites, weapons complements, and sensor stations specific to that platform. Whether you prefer to drop mines from the P-3C Orion, guard convoys

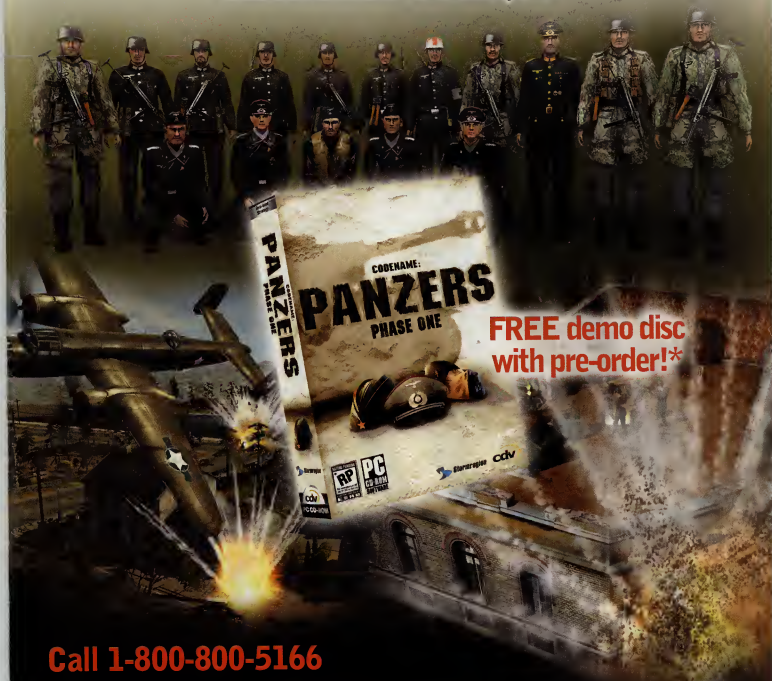
with the frigate, or torpedo enemy task forces with one of the subs, this simulation is amazingly diverse.

Dangerous Waters will use the latest vertex- and pixel-shading techniques to help create a believable oceanic environment, and it'll employ scalable realism levels to satisfy both raw recruits and seasoned admirals. Two semi-dynamic career campaigns, a large pool of stand-alone missions, and a robust multiplayer component should keep most seafaring gamers afloat for months.

DEVELOPER: SONALYSTS COMBAT SIMULATIONS
PUBLISHER: TBA
RELEASE DATE: Q3 2004

(DX9 will also feature pre-rendered CGI aircraft. Oh hey, you'll be able to see the HUD, too.)

EB GAMES™
electronics boutique®



FREE demo disc with pre-order!*

Call 1-800-800-5166
for the store nearest you
or visit us at www.ebgames.com

PC $39.99

*Demo disc available in stores on 8/15/04. Limit one per customer While supplies last. See sales associate for complete details. Typographical errors are not the responsibility of EB Games.

EB GAMES™ electronics boutique®

We take games seriously™

cdv

hip games

Having their skeleton smooshed by Force Crush, one of the 30 new powers, can really ruin someone's day.

DEVELOPER/PUBLISHER: LUCASARTS • RELEASE DATE: SPRING 2005

KOTOR II

KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC II: THE SITH LORDS

LucasArts strikes back! Can a fresh new developer and a trio of super-Dark Jedi improve on the best game of 2003?

IS IT SEQUEL TIME ALREADY? When LucasArts announced that the successor to our 2003 Game of the Year, ***Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic***, would ship less than two years after the original — and that BioWare wouldn't be developing the game — we wondered if this great franchise would be sullied by a rushed follow-up.

But LucasArts isn't trying to pull a Jedi mind trick on fans of its breakout RPG. ***KOTOR II: The Sith Lords*** is getting the full treatment by Obsidian Entertainment, a brand-new development house formed by ex-designers from Black Isle Studios, Blizzard, and EA. ***The Sith Lords*** appears to be in good hands.

SLIGHTLY LATER IN A GALAXY FAR, FAR AWAY

KOTOR II's story picks up five years after the events of the first game. The war with the Sith and its aftermath left the Jedi ranks depleted, and three powerful Sith lords rose to fill the void of evil leadership left by Darth Malak and Revan (whose fate will be revealed as part of the story). Having hunted down the remaining

Moments earlier: "This Jedi will be no match for me and my big stick!"

Fight fire...

...assassins...

...or multiple droids.

You can even punch.

Jedi, the Sith lords believe you, a former Jedi who left the Order, to be the last non-Sith Force user left alive. Lucky you — their full attention is now devoted to finishing the job of wiping you and your kind from the face of the galaxy.

The game begins as you are found alone, unconscious, and adrift in the battle-scarred *Ebon Hawk* by a mining vessel and taken back to its station for treatment. (LucasArts isn't saying how your new character ended up onboard Revan's ship, leaving those details as a surprise.) After waking up in the medical bay, you discover that everyone in the station is mysteriously dead, except for one survivor who will join your party and get you started on your quest. You'll begin the game as an out-of-practice Jedi with some minor Force powers, but don't expect to have a lightsaber right off the bat: you'll have to work for that prize.

To incorporate your chosen ending from the first game, including whether you drifted toward the light or dark side of the Force and how that affected the galaxy, Obsidian has scripted NPCs to pose subtle questions about Revan's journey. Your responses, as to whether Revan was a male Jedi, a female Dark Jedi, or any other combination of sex and alignment, will have a big impact on how the story plays out.

MAY NEW FEATURES BE WITH YOU

»» Obsidian has added a few handy new features to the sequel based on user suggestions posted on *KOTOR*'s online forums. One such option is the ability to create an alternate weapon configuration that lets you easily switch between ranged and melee weapons on the fly, encouraging you to use a wider variety of the weapons at your disposal.

For example, some weapons are excellent against droids but weak against organic lifeforms. When a killer droid popped up in *KOTOR*, it was a hassle to pause the game and change weapons only to switch back for the next human enemy. Now you can make this swap with the push of a button.

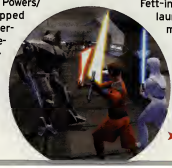
The Sith soldiers are easily bamboozled, but they're persistent.

You'd think these Sith Assassins would be cheerier, seeing the galaxy through those rose-colored lenses.

Other new twists include an enhanced item-upgrade system and the ability to split your party into two groups and solve puzzles that require people to be in two places at the same time.

Obsidian estimates that you'll have about 30 new Force Powers and 30 new Feats to choose from, in addition to the majority of the ones that were in the first game. (Some old Powers/Feats were dropped because the team determined they weren't useful enough.) New powers include the malevolent Force Crush, a crueler version of Force Choke that lifts an enemy off the ground as it painfully crushes and contorts his body. Force Scream damages and stuns all enemies in a radius around you, and Force Sight shows you another character's Force alignment and allows you to see through walls.

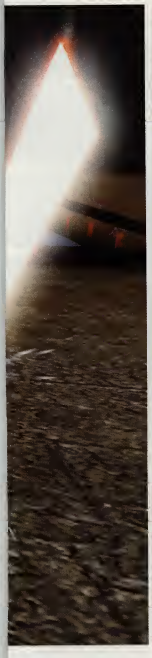
The number of new weapons and armor hasn't been decided yet, but one of the highlights we were shown is a Boba Fett-inspired wrist-mounted rocket launcher. Lightsabers will be mostly unchanged except that more colors will be available, such as silver, plus darker and lighter variations of the existing blue, green, purple, red, orange and yellow sabers.

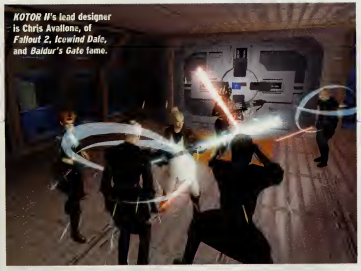


Your party can contain a maximum of 10 characters at once, but more than 10 are available to choose from. NPCs will discriminate based on your Force alignment, so if your play-style is too goody-goody, evil characters will refuse to join you (and vice versa). Once part of your group, party members may gradually change their alignment based on the team's decisions, becoming lighter or darker.

Some of your party members from *KOTOR* will likely make a comeback. LucasArts won't reveal specifics except to say that HK-model assassin droids will return with a vengeance. We were also shown a female bounty hunter (with a conscience, naturally) named Mira, and a roguish fellow named Atton who will

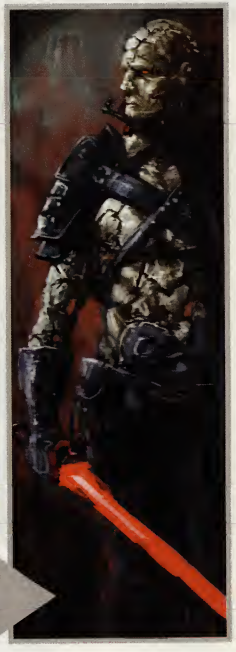
➤ **"What color lightsaber do you want me to kill you with?"**





KOTOR II's lead designer is Chris Avellone, of *Fallout 2*, *Icewind Dale*, and *Baldur's Gate* fame.

Another new Force power, Force Scream, will stun enemies and draw praise from Simon Cowell.



DARTH SION One of the three Sith Lords out for your blood is Darth Sion. The dark side has chewed him up and spit him out, leaving him a scarred mess kept alive only by his hatred. No pain you can inflict will bother him much, since his repeatedly mutilated body keeps him in such a state of perpetual agony that he'll hardly notice anything less than a mortal wound.

exhibit skills as a pilot and technician, along with a strong desire to live.

Like *KOTOR*, this game will span seven planets, including the mining colony on which you start. You'll also visit Carth's devastated homeworld, Telos, which was mentioned but not seen in the first game. Telos' surface was destroyed in the war between the Republic and the Sith, and now the surviving population lives on Citadel Station, a massive floating city, while the surface is being terraformed to support life again. After docking at Citadel Station, you'll be able to explore both the city and the barren planet below.

Other new locations will include the planet Peragus and the twin worlds of Dxun and Onderon, with each world consisting of several different environments. (For example, on one of the worlds you'll explore a Sith Tomb, and elsewhere you'll board an alien starship.)

In addition to your old favorites, several creatures new to the *Star Wars* universe have been created by Obsidian (and approved by Lucasfilm) to populate the new territories. We saw a couple of vicious critters during our peak at an early build of *KOTOR II*: a Cannok, which looked like a frog-eyed reptilian bull, and a squat lizard-like creature called a Boma Beast.

FILLING SOME BIG SHOES

»» *KOTOR II* will be approximately the same size and length as its predecessor, with around 40 hours of gameplay and more than 10,000 lines of spoken dialogue, and *KOTOR*'s mini-games — swoop racing, Pazaak, and turret shooting — will all return with enhancements. As with the first game, LucasArts promises some exclusive PC content that will not be initially available in the Xbox version.

It looks like there'll be enough action, new content, and plot packed into *The Sith Lords* to make sure it transcends the dreaded "overpriced expansion pack" feel of some sequels. With the collective RPG experience of Obsidian at the helm, *KOTOR II* could even be the rare Padawan that overshadows its master. — *D.J. Stapleton*

Reviews

YOUR ULTIMATE GUIDE TO NEW GAME RELEASES

DOOM 3, pg. 34

JOINT OPERATIONS, pg. 58

SINGLES, pg. 68

GET OFF YOUR FAT ASS!

Coconut Monkey unveils his new diet and exercise plan*

As work on my magnum opus *Gravy Trader* continues to zip right along, I have grown increasingly concerned about America's ever-increasing waistline. Because of my heritage and close relation to all things coconut (and its sweet, fat-laden meat and juice), I know firsthand how hard it is to shed pounds and keep them off.

In fact, I've tried every diet imaginable: low-carb, high-carb, and even the one that emphasizes the importance of hanging around on some southern beach. And none of them worked!

That is why I'm unveiling the "Get Off Your Fat Ass" diet and exercise plan, which is designed specifically for gamers. Its tenets are fairly simple — don't suck down pound after pound of sweet, tasty lard (or related lard products and juices), and get off your ass every now and then.

Sure, playing games all hours of the day is fun, but it isn't going to get rid of that pizza gut. Do you want to be trim and look like a dynamo? Tired of bullies kicking sand in your face and stealing your girl? Tired of having to wash all that kicked sand out of your bathing suit?

Then watch what you eat and work out four times a week, for an hour, and keep it up for the rest of your life. Unlike *Gravy Trader*, it isn't rocket science. It's not even any kind of science. It's just common sense.

PCG'S REBUTTAL

LONGTIME READERS KNOW THAT THE STAFF of *PC Gamer* has a proud history of enjoying the greasiest fast foods. So we're shocked and appalled at Coconut Monkey's new diet plan, which is little more than junk science and has no meaningful application in the real world.

Everyone knows that our top scientists are working day and night toward the creation of the FatLoss pill, which will destroy fat on a molecular level and flush it out of the body. We hear that this wonderful creation will be released anytime now, so we say kick back, relax, and keep doing nothing. Game on!

PC GAMER PLAYLIST

DAN NORRIS Alas, Adam Bomb has been sidelined by the bureaucratic wranglings required to ship this magazine on time. However, I did exert my executive powers to be the first person on the planet to play through *Doom 3*. See my review on page 34.

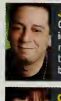
COREY COHEN In anticipation of Coconut Monkey's *Great Gulpin' Goliaths* (see page 8), I've been replaying *Rampage: World Tour* (1998). You've got to love a game that lets you stomp buildings and punch airplanes. And I've reached level 18 in *City of Heroes*!

GREG VEDERMAN Sometimes, the game you want to play just isn't available. When that happens, I turn to mid-day naptime for help. This month I dreamt I was playing *Divine Divinity*, and its clickity-click gameplay was stupendous. I give it 99%.

CHUCK OSBORN As I get deeper into *City of Heroes*, I've realized that my crime-fighting skills are wasted on cyberspace. Beating down evildoers is my destiny. Will I refuse its call? NAY! Wearing a costume made of old gaming tees, I hunt the night.

BILL HARMS The mean streets of Paragon City are a little safer now that my alter-ego Ice Playa has hit level 20. When I'm not thumping skulls, I'm getting it done in *Joint Operations*: I've been having a blast with the game's cooperative mode.

D.J. STAPLETON I've been trying in vain to keep up with Chiaki in *City of Heroes*, but she's left me in her super-dust. If only I wasn't equally obsessed with beating *Far Cry* on the hardest difficulty setting, I might stand a chance.



JOE MITCH My adventures in Paragon City are on hold for a bit because of impending knee surgery. If zombies overrun San Francisco before I wake up from the anesthesia, please leave an M-16 by my bedside to give me a fighting chance.

CHIAKI HACHISU Must eat...must sleep...must take shower...must stop playing! Can't. Too much evil to fight. Damn them. First one's free, they said. Makes me look cool, they said. Should have said, "Hell no!" Now...too late. *City of Heroes* is my monkey.

HOW WE RATE THE GAMES

90% — 90%–96% **EDITORS' CHOICE** — It's not easy to get here, and games in this range come with our unqualified recommendation.

80% — 80%–88% **EXCELLENT** — These are excellent games. They're well worth your purchase, and each one is likely a great example of its genre.

70% — 70%–78% **GOOD** — These are pretty good games that we'd recommend to fans of the particular genre, but better options exist.

60% — 60%–68% **ABOVE AVERAGE** — Reasonable, above-average games. They might be worth buying, but they probably have a few significant flaws.

50% — 50%–58% **MERELY OKAY** — We're children's games. They're not completely worthless, but you can definitely find numerous better choices.

40% — 40%–48% **TOLERABLE** — Poor quality. Only a few slightly redeeming features keep these games from the abyss of the next category.

30% — 30%–0% **DON'T BOTHER** — Just terrible. These games are the electronic equivalent of the wretched filth surrounding Yurtlevo's work area.

*Lawyer alert: Consult with your doctor before starting any exercise plan. The preceding statements have not been approved by the FDA. Your results may vary.

Perfect LCD Screens - Guaranteed
You Choose Your Custom Color of Auto Finish
Custom Graphics and Artwork Available
Black Ops™ Aluminum Carrying Case Included
FragBook
1-888-FALCON-1
www.falcon-nw.com
FragBook
BY FALCON NORTHWEST
A Higher Definition of Notebook

VITAL STATS

DEV NovaLogic ■ PUB NovaLogic ■ REQUIRED PIII 1.2GHz, 256MB RAM, 1.5GB HD, 32MB 3D card with hardware T&L
■ WE RECOMMEND P4 2.4GHz, 1GB RAM, 128MB 3D card, broadband ■ MAXIMUM PLAYERS 150 ■ ESRB RATING T

This kind of close-quarters combat is pretty rare. Usually you're fighting from a distance.

JOINT OPERATIONS

Forget that army of one — here's an army of 150

For the longest time, it seemed as if NovaLogic was content to push out tired *Delta Force* game after tired *Delta Force* game. Thankfully, the company reversed course last year with the excellent *Black Hawk Down*; and now with *Joint Operations: Typhoon Rising*, there's no doubt that NovaLogic is finding its stride as a high-end publisher. While hardly perfect, *Joint Ops* is an adrenaline-fueled good time that provides a tactically deeper alternative to *Battlefield Vietnam*.

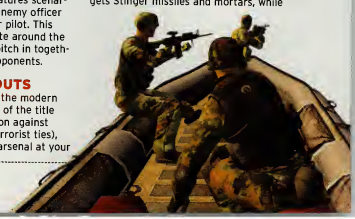
Like the *Battlefield* series, *Joint Ops* is essentially an online-only game, with support for a whopping 150 players per server. You can (and should) run through the brief solo tutorials to get up to speed on weapons, vehicles, and tactics. From there, you can dive into four gameplay modes: Advance and Secure (which is similar to *Battlefield*'s default mode of play); Team King of the Hill; Team Deathmatch; and Co-op, which lets you and your friends join forces against enemy bots.

Co-op mode provides a great alternative to straight online play, and features scenarios such as assassinating an enemy officer or rescuing a downed chopper pilot. This mode is already a huge favorite around the *PCG* office, where we can all pitch in together to get it done against AI opponents.

REAL-WORLD LOADOUTS

■ Because *Joint Ops* is set in the modern era of combat (the "joint ops" of the title refers to an international action against Indonesian separatists with terrorist ties), you'll have a large, high-tech arsenal at your disposal. The game has two playable sides — Joint Ops and Indonesian rebels — and each gets the same character classes: rifleman, gunner, engineer, medic, and sniper.

As you'd expect, weapons are class-specific, so engineers are the only class that gets Stinger missiles and mortars, while



Some vehicles, such as this ATV, are amphibious.

gunners are the only players who can carry light machineguns. In a welcome addition to the genre, you can both switch weapons and change classes by accessing small ammo dumps on the map.

But the real joy is the vehicles. There are 18 basic vehicles — ranging from the Stryker armored personnel carrier to Black Hawk helicopters — and each has numerous iterations. Not only do the vehicles pack a potent punch, but they're also extremely easy to control. So easy, in fact, that they put the ones in *Battlefield Vietnam* to shame.

SERVER SORROW

Ironically, what NovaLogic touts as one of *Joint Ops*' greatest assets is also one of its biggest weaknesses. Though the game is designed for games containing up to 150 players, a server with that many people on it will tax even the fattest broadband connection. In fact, I would declare each of the 150-player games I entered unplayable — and I wouldn't recommend that anyone with less than a DSL line even try one.

However, on servers with around 80 people or less, the firefights are simply awe-inspiring — and let's face it, 80 is a whole lot of folks. Especially if everyone knows what they're doing. Landing at an LZ with white-hot tracer fire whipping all around you, or calling in a mortar strike on an enemy position, are moments that will give you goosebumps. It's in these moments that *Joint Ops* delivers on its promise.

Unfortunately, these flashes of utter genius are occasionally tainted by the game's overall lack of polish. You'll find some annoying bugs, like objectives not being updated in Co-op mode, or your being able to "see" through walls by moving close and using the lean button. (These clipping problems have plagued NovaLogic's engines for years now, with no hope in sight.) I also had problems when I turned on anti-aliasing: the screen would go black during gameplay, with nothing visible other than waypoints and player names.

The other weak spot is the multiplayer interface — another issue that NovaLogic has struggled with for several years. When you host a mission, you get only a list of map names; there's no way to figure out what the maps look like, how many people they're ideal for, or how many objectives each one has. Hopefully, this deficiency — along with the aforementioned bugs — will be addressed in upcoming patches.

Visually, *Joint Ops* isn't going to dethrone *Far Cry*, but it does have its own charms. A 30-minute day/night cycle provides some incredible vistas as the sun sets and rises, and the night-vision effects are the best I've ever seen in a game, complete with motion blur. However, some of the textures, especially the vehicle interiors, are just downright bland.

While I can't justify giving *Joint Ops* an Editors' Choice award, I will say that when you find a server where everything clicks, the experience is euphoric. The combined-arms combat is an absolute blast and the fighting is extremely intense. This game is indeed the "thinking man's" *Battlefield*. ■ LI C. KUO

(1) Stinger anti-aircraft missiles are heatseeking, so you can just fire and forget. (2) At extreme ranges, bullets will begin to drop. Use your mil-dot sights to compensate. (3) A rocket attack from a Little Bird is effective and fun. (4) Black Hawks provide fire support and transportation. (5) People who drive/fly friends into combat score points for delivering their teammates safely, as do medics for reviving people.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS Huge battles and intense firefights; great vehicles; fantastic fun when everything clicks.

LOWS Buggy, laggy, inconsistent performance online; poor user interface.

BOTTOM LINE A fine multiplayer game hindered by disheartening bugs and a lack of polish.

85%

EXCELLENT

VITAL STATS
DEVELOPER Acclaim PUBLISHER Acclaim REQUIRED P4 2GHz, 256MB RAM, 1.2GB HD, 16MB 3D card
WE RECOMMEND P4 2.6GHz, 512MB RAM, 64MB 3D card MAXIMUM PLAYERS 1 ESRB RATING T

ALIAS

And which costume will Sydney be wearing in this episode?

In an interview with *Sci-Fi Online*, Jennifer Garner said: "I think there's probably nothing better than having a virtual [version of yourself]. I wish I could send her in work for me when I have to go at 5 a.m...." Amen to that.

Whether you love the TV show *Alias* or despise it, it's tough not to like the cyber-spy thriller's leading lady, Jennifer Garner. Her charisma and sex appeal vault Garner above her stable of forgettable co-stars, and without her, it's a sure bet that the series wouldn't have made it past season one.

It's the same deal with the *Alias* game, which has finally arrived on the PC. Garner provides the voice-acting for ass-kicking, costume-changing secret agent Sydney Bristow — and in a different medium than her regular TV stomping grounds, the actress manages to elevate what would otherwise be a totally lackluster experience into something that's greater than the sum of its below-average parts.

The main draw here, naturally, is that you get to play as Sydney, and fans of the show will be delighted with how closely her PC alter-ego reflects her television counterpart. *Alias*' graphics are a bit dated compared to those in the likes of *Splinter Cell*, but Sydney's 3D visage is aptly modeled — an aspect made even more key by the game's third-person perspective — and her personality and abilities stay reasonably true to the show's take.

Unfortunately, those who aren't familiar with the series will likely find the plot difficult to follow, as it essentially picks up on events from the end of season two. It has Sydney and the rest of her CIA cohorts racing against perennial archenemies Anna Espinosa, Arvin Sloane, and "Mr. Sark" to find a dangerous and powerful Rambaldi artifact.

Over the course of 11 large missions you'll infiltrate various high-security locations across the globe and shoot, kick, punch, and sneak your way to achieving various objectives, such as planting a snooping device, stealing an item, or rescuing someone.

It's all very reminiscent of *Splinter Cell*, but doesn't quite reach that game's heights. The mission design is far too linear, and

In most missions, Sydney has a choice of outfits that you can change at will. How long until a nude mod appears is anyone's guess. INSET: Sydney avoids security lasers by scaling a railing.

Sydney's supporting cast from the show — such as "love interest" Michael Vaughn and tech geek Marshall Flinkman — provide too much information: you don't need to figure anything out on your own.

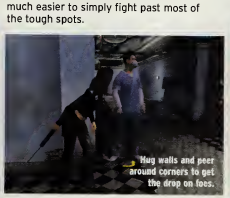
You have all kinds of spy gadgets at your disposal, and when need be you can pick up random items in the environments, such as a broom or wrench, to use as bludgeons. While you can purportedly use stealth to get through much of the game, it was usually more trouble than it's worth — it's much easier to simply fight past most of the tough spots.

Though you can use a keyboard-and-mouse setup to play the game, you'll find it a much more kludgy method than using a decent gamepad — and dual analog sticks are a must. Even then, though, it's difficult to be precise with your controls, and fights often devolve into button-mashing contests.

That problem is compounded by shoddy enemy AI. Sometimes you can be standing 20 feet in front of a guard in a well-lit room and remain invisible to him, while other times you may be detected from 50 feet or more while crouching in a dark corner.

As you can see, *Alias* has *many* faults. But the simple joy of playing as Sydney, plus a solid *Alias* story, makes the game worthwhile for hardcore fans of the TV show. ■ STEVE KLETT

Tools like thermal vision help you see enemies in dark environments.



Hug walls and peer around corners to get the drop on foes.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS Playing as Sydney is a hoot; enjoyable *Alias* story; fun to play with all the gadgets.

LOWS Gameplay gets repetitive; dumbed-down gameplay mechanics; lousy enemy AI.

BOTTOM LINE Only hardcore *Alias* fans will be able to overlook the bevy of blemishes.

60%

ABOVE AVERAGE

VITAL STATS
- DEVELOPER Nival Entertainment
- PUBLISHER COV
- REQUIRED PIII 450MHz, 64MB RAM, 1.5GB HD, 16MB 3D card
- WE RECOMMEND PIII 1GHz, 256MB RAM, 32MB 3D card
- MAXIMUM PLAYERS 1
- ESRB RATING T

BLITZKRIEG: BURNING HORIZON

Fight World War II from the perspective of goose-stepping Nazis

With *Burning Horizon*, a standalone expansion to 2003's *Blitzkrieg*, Russian developer Nival Entertainment has crafted a challenging and fun RTS game that, unfortunately, still suffers from some of its predecessor's shortcomings.

BH's main campaign gives you control of Rommel's Axis troops. Over the course of 18 missions, ranging from defensive battles to evacuations, you fight across the deserts of North Africa and eventually end up in Normandy.

Ambush enemy artillery nests using heavy tanks and your own howitzer support.

Extra missions let you wage war in other theaters — you'll play as the Russians trying to fend off the Germans, for instance, or as the English, Australian, and Indian troops holding Singapore against 700,000 Japanese invaders.

Unit accuracy is impeccable, which means that *BH* not only offers in-depth gameplay, but also requires genuine strategy if you want to succeed. For example, you'll almost never prevail in a frontal assault: you first want to soften up your target with long-range howitzers, and then flank with your Panzers and infantry. A successful mission — although difficult — is like poetry in motion. Also, air power plays a much more important role now, making you rely on recon planes and even dive-bombers to see through the fog of war.

One thing hasn't changed, though — there's still excessive troop micromanagement. Every unit has limited ammunition, and because your supply trucks are too dumb to do their job on their own, you have to hold their hand.

Aside from its supply tedium (and lack of multiplay), the game's horribly wonky pathfinding AI remains the ultimate knock against an otherwise great title. 3D units on a luscious 2D terrain may look pretty, but for some reason your units have a heck of a time figuring out where they can and can't go.

Capturing this coastal battery at Normandy can tip the scales of battle.

Though it has some flaws, the strategic realism and the sheer amount of carnage on display ultimately make *Burning Horizon* an enjoyable RTS experience. If you like realistic wargames and want to experience WWII battles from a different perspective, you can't go wrong with this one. ■ J.T. TROLLMAN

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT 77% GOOD

VITAL STATS
- DEV Spellbound Studios
- PUB Wanadoo Edition
- REQUIRED PIII 800MHz, 128MB RAM, 1GB HD, 32MB 3D card
- WE RECOMMEND P4 1.6GHz, 256MB RAM, 64MB 3D card
- MAXIMUM PLAYERS 1
- ESRB RATING T

CHICAGO 1930

Like Luca Brazzi, this game sleeps with the fishes

All you *Commandos* fans hungry for a new squad-based real-time strategy game — go right on playing *Commandos*. You won't miss much by skipping *Chicago 1930*, a dull and frustrating exercise in finding keys and learning to exploit weak AI.

The game offers 20 missions, split evenly between a Mafia campaign and an FBI campaign. In the first, you play as up-and-coming mob enforcer Jack Beretto, backed by a quartet of purple-suited goons who help you battle other mob families, police, and a mysterious underworld figure known as The Baron. Beretto's tactics are simple: whack the opposition, and if any civilians should see you in the act, either bribe them to keep quiet or add them to the body count.

Tommy guns quickly dispatch foes (and friends, if you're not careful).

The second campaign puts you in the shoes of FBI agent Edward Nash and his squad of untouchables as they try to arrest mob boss Don Falcone and uncover The Baron's real identity. Nash's modus operandi is different from Beretto's — shooting first and asking questions later won't fly with the higher-ups, and one wrong move can land you or your men in jail.

So far, so good, but *Chicago 1930* suffers from a catastrophically fatal error: It's impossible for your squad to fight as one cohesive unit. The AI is so dumb that friendly fire is commonplace, which means that you'll want to control only one or two men at a time and sideline the rest of the squad until they're needed.

This just in: Game Boring

Both campaigns have you "investigating" between gunfights, but this section of the game is extremely linear, and usually involves running all over the level looking for a person with a speech bubble over his head to get a key that'll unlock some door. Exciting it isn't.

Letting you play the game from opposing points of view is interesting, but *Chicago 1930* is crushed by its ankle-deep strategy, horrid AI, and tedious key-hunting. I say go rent *The Untouchables* instead. ■ D.J. STAPLETON

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT 45% TOLERABLE

VITAL STATS

DEVELOPER Surreal Software PUBLISHER Midway/Encore REQUIRED PIII 1GHz, 128MB RAM, 2GB HD, 32MB 3D card
WE RECOMMEND P4 2.0GHz, 512MB RAM, 64MB DirectX 9-compliant 3D card MAXIMUM PLAYERS 1 ESRB RATING M

THE SUFFERING

The second-spookiest game we played this month

As with every bad breakup, Torque has frequent visions of his deceased ex-wife while escaping from Abbot prison. Even from beyond the grave, she's all "Nag, nag, nag" and "Don't forget to buy cat food." Bangit!

The scariest prison movie I've ever seen is *Reform School Girls* starring the late Wendy O. Williams. (Lingerie catfights? Thank you, Skinemax!) But not even that could prepare me for the very real scares that lie ahead in *The Suffering*, a first-or-third-person shooter that is one of the most chilling, disturbing games I've ever played. And I mean that in the best way possible.

You play as Torque, convicted of murdering your ex-wife and two children. As the game begins, you're being locked away in Abbot State Penitentiary, located on the grounds of a former mental institution built on secluded Carnate Island. During the opening cinematic, you're being walked to your death-row cell to await lethal injection. The other short-timers bicker, taunting you and each other. But once the bars slam shut, all hell busts loose.

The prison is hit by what at first seems to be an earthquake — except for the sounds of your fellow inmates being eviscerated, one by one. The cell door slides open and you enter a ghastly scene: the other prisoners have been carved up like Thanksgiving turkeys, the walls and floors decorated with splatters of blood. A corrections officer calls to you from the other side of the door leading to death row. Just as suddenly, a creature with knives attached to its arms and legs gracefully flips down from the ceiling and slices a blade right through the back of the hack's head. Guilty or innocent — it doesn't matter. From here on out, it's about survival.

The beauty of *The Suffering* is that it keeps up the pressure from the first few seconds all the way through the game's 15 to 20 hours of gameplay. You'll be assaulted on all sides by creepy monsters, plagued by intense visions, and urged by the whispers inside your head to either kill or save the NPCs you encounter. (Your ex-wife's voice pleads, "Protect him, he can help you," while your demonic side counters: "He's weak. F**k him!")

Good and evil behavior add up, ultimately affecting which of the three endings you'll get. An insanity meter builds as you kill beasties; once it's full and pulsing, you can turn into a lumpy, blade-wielding creature yourself. Though that's tempting, there's enough conventional weaponry — including revolvers, Tommy guns, TNT sticks, and tripod-mounted machineguns — to get you out of almost any hairy situation.

The Suffering's main downside is that its graphics engine isn't the latest and greatest. It also has some minor graphical and sound glitches, and the monster attacks can become repetitive. Scare for scare, though, it's horror at its undiles-soiling best. ■ CHUCK OSBORN

The shotgun may be just about the best friend you'll meet in *The Suffering*. It has a lot of stopping power but a long reload time.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

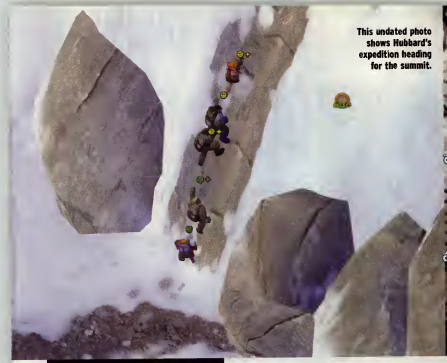
HIGHS Non-stop terror; immersive story; three endings; playable using first- or third-person view.

LOWS Graphics engine is about a generation behind; minor bugs; monster repetition.

BOTTOM LINE You can forget the *Silent Hill* series — *this* is some scary-ass stuff!

86%

EXCELLENT



This undated photo shows Hubbard's expedition heading for the summit.

GENRE: **STRATEGY**

EVEREST

A soaring saga of cannibalism, Yeti, and idiotic climbers

From the tattered remains of Gardiner Greene Hubbard's undated journal, found on the northern slope of Mount Everest:

Tragedy strikes! Oh, the humanity!

It has come to this, conquering the mighty slope known as Everest (or Sagarmatha, as our Nepalese hosts call it). The journey to this point has been long and arduous, as I first had to conquer six other mountains, including the majestic Mount McKinley.

I had thought that my accompaniment of fellow climbers would be more than sufficient for the attempt at the summit, but how I was mistaken. It seems that despite my best efforts to adequately "train" them in the various arts of climbing, they all seem to lack the most basic cognitive thinking. In fact, they keep insisting on trying to walk through rocks (as opposed to simply walking *around* them), and they bunch up when it comes time to climb, crawling around on the grand like common baboons.

I am loathe to admit that to survive this long, I have been forced to resort to the most barbaric of human survival techniques — namely, cannibalism. Despite our access to seemingly state-of-the-art gear, I was shocked to find that my inventory slots were tragically limited in size and scope. Once our food ran out, it was only a matter of time before we looked toward each other for sustenance. As the Sirdar of our expedition, I laid first claim to my companions' tender undersides...

...cold has finally seized me and I fear that I am being stalked by a ravenous Yeti: I hear its ferocious caterwauling at night. Because of a random avalanche, I find myself with a broken leg and head injury, and exhaustion has rendered me immobile. With the Yeti closing in, I fear that my time is drawing short.

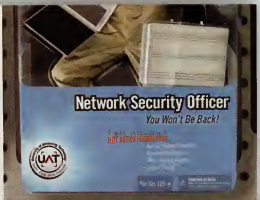
Alas, if only I had been able to discern between the various paths in front of me — perhaps then I could have found a way out of this frozen hell. However, since all of the paths look exactly the same (and even bear a striking resemblance to past climbs, although that might be hypothermia clouding my memory), it's hard for me to tell one climb from another. They've all blurred together into an indiscernible mosaic.

The Yeti at last approaches. I can hear its slobbering and the clicking of its hungry teeth. Soon my long and torturous ordeal will finally be at an end... ■ TRANSCRIBED BY WILLIAM HARMS

VITAL STATS

- **DEVELOPER** Zono
- **PUBLISHER** Activision Value
- **RECOMMEND** PII 400MHz, 64MB RAM, 500MB HD, 16MB 3D card
- **WE RECOMMEND** PIII 800MHz, 128MB RAM, some NoDoz
- **MAXIMUM PLAYERS** 1
- **ESRB RATING** E

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT **24%** DON'T BOTHER



You plan on playing in the real world?

A real college degree, focused on advancing technology. Available online or on-campus.

GAME DESIGN
VIDEO PRODUCTION
DIGITAL ANIMATION
NETWORK SECURITY
E-COMMERCE
SOFTWARE ENGINEERING
TECHNOLOGY MANAGEMENT
MULTIMEDIA
WEB DESIGN
DATABASE MANAGEMENT

University of Advancing Technology
UAT
Learn. Experience. Network.

Learn more. www.uat.edu or 800.658.5744

VITAL STATS
DEVELOPER Massive Entertainment PUBLISHER Vivendi REQUIRED PIII 800, 128MB RAM, 1.5GB HD, 32MB 3D card
WE RECOMMEND P4 1.6GHz, 512MB RAM, 128MB 3D card MAXIMUM PLAYERS 8 ESRB RATING T

ON THE CD

ABOVE: Sometimes the AI chokes a bit and units push against each other and bunch up. Thankfully, they keep laying the smack down. **LEFT:** Though you don't construct any buildings or structures over the course of the game, you can take control of some stationary items, like cannons and flamethrowers.

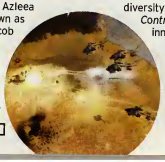
GROUND CONTROL II

You're humanity's last hope against a traitorous human and her unholy alien legions

It's been four long years since *Ground Control* exploded onto the real-time-strategy scene with its supple graphics, unique take on resource management (namely, that there *wasn't* any beyond your immediate troops), and explosive multiplayer modes. We loved it.

For the sequel, Massive Entertainment has kept all that was great about the original, while tweaking and refining many of its core concepts. The resulting effort is one of the year's most enjoyable RTS games.

Set centuries after *Ground Control*, *Ground Control II: Operation Exodus* finds the Northern Star Alliance (the NSA, also known as "the good guys") under massive assault by the devious Emperor Vlaana Azleea and her Terran goons (also known as "the bad guys"). You play as Jacob Angelus, the NSA's last hope at fending off Vlaana — that is, until the alien Virons show up and throw the whole balance of the war out of whack.



Ground Control II features NSA and Viron campaigns, but the bulk of the missions place you in control of NSA forces. I won't ruin too much of the story, but suffice it to say that it offers some good twists — and as sci-fi yarns go, it's pretty decent. The voice-acting is wonderfully hammy and does a fine job of selling you on the characters and their plight.

As for the missions, they're generally well-crafted and move things along, although they're a little too generic for my tastes: they tend to fall into time-honored categories like "find the enemy and smash them," "rescue so and so," or "defend the base until the timer reaches zero." Granted, these setups are the norm for the RTS genre, but given its wide diversity of playable forces, *Ground Control II* begs for some more innovative gameplay situations.

Controlling the action is very intuitive, as long as you don't use the default RTS camera. That viewing mode caused me nothing but headaches — instead of offering a consistent view, the camera hugged the ground too closely and would often pull away from the action. That's just wrong. I definitely recommend ditching the default perspective and taking charge of the camera yourself; it's easy to learn and a breeze to navigate with.

Dropships are now at your command at all times (in *GC*, they simply ferried in your troops at the beginning or end of a level). As you move through a mission, you seize victory locations and landing zones, which earn you acquisition points. (You also earn points by defeating enemy forces.) You can then use your acquisition points to call in reinforcements, which land at an LZ of your choosing.

I can see why hardcore fans of the first game might balk at this idea, but I found it to be a very welcome addition to the series. Because the game limits the number of forces you can call down at one time, you still must employ a high degree of tactical aptitude if you want to be victorious. And gameplay is balanced so that a single unit type

FREE STUFF

☐ YES, Send me the next 12 issues and 12 CD-ROMs of PC GAMER for just $19.95 — that's a savings of 79% off the newsstand rate! With my paid order, I'll also receive The Ultimate Strategy Anthology, The Complete Reviews Encyclopedia and The Amazing Extended Play Collection — ALL FOR FREE!

Offer good in the U.S. only. Canada: U.S. $34.95 (includes GST). Foreign: U.S. $49.95. Prepaid in U.S. funds. Newsstand price per issue with disc is $7.99. Please allow 6–8 weeks for mailing of first issue.

PC GAMER

Name

Address Apt.#

City State Zip

☐ Payment enclosed ☐ Bill me later

JG94ND1BY

FREE STUFF

☐ YES, Send me the next 12 issues and 12 CD-ROMs of PC GAMER for just $19.95 — that's a savings of 79% off the newsstand rate! With my paid order, I'll also receive The Ultimate Strategy Anthology, The Complete Reviews Encyclopedia and The Amazing Extended Play Collection — ALL FOR FREE!

Offer good in the U.S. only. Canada: U.S. $34.95 (includes GST). Foreign: U.S. $49.95. Prepaid in U.S. funds. Newsstand price per issue with disc is $7.99. Please allow 6–8 weeks for mailing of first issue.

PC GAMER

Name

Address Apt.#

City State Zip

☐ Payment enclosed ☐ Bill me later

JG94ND1BY

FREE STUFF

☐ YES, Send me the next 12 issues and 12 CD-ROMs of PC GAMER for just $19.95 — that's a savings of 79% off the newsstand rate! With my paid order, I'll also receive The Ultimate Strategy Anthology, The Complete Reviews Encyclopedia and The Amazing Extended Play Collection — ALL FOR FREE!

Offer good in the U.S. only. Canada: U.S. $34.95 (includes GST). Foreign: U.S. $49.95. Prepaid in U.S. funds. Newsstand price per issue with disc is $7.99. Please allow 6–8 weeks for mailing of first issue.

PC GAMER

Name

Address Apt.#

City State Zip

☐ Payment enclosed ☐ Bill me later

JG94ND1BY

NO POSTAGE NECESSARY IF MAILED IN THE UNITED STATES

BUSINESS REPLY MAIL

FIRST-CLASS MAIL PERMIT NO. 218 HARLAN IA

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY THE ADDRESSEE

PC GAMER
P O BOX 5158
HARLAN IA 51593-2658

NO POSTAGE NECESSARY IF MAILED IN THE UNITED STATES

BUSINESS REPLY MAIL

FIRST-CLASS MAIL PERMIT NO. 218 HARLAN IA

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY THE ADDRESSEE

PC GAMER
P O BOX 5158
HARLAN IA 51593-2658

NO POSTAGE NECESSARY IF MAILED IN THE UNITED STATES

BUSINESS REPLY MAIL

FIRST-CLASS MAIL PERMIT NO. 218 HARLAN IA

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY THE ADDRESSEE

PC GAMER
P O BOX 5158
HARLAN IA 51593-2658

can't dominate the field of battle, even in a surprise dropship-strike.

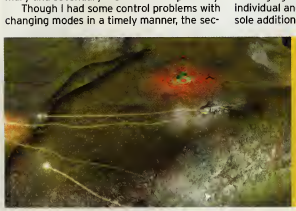
Part of this game-balancing includes a secondary mode for all of the game's units. For example, the NSA Rocket Terradyne fires a ferocious volley of rockets in its primary mode, while its secondary mode creates a large forcefield that deflects incoming rockets and artillery. For all of the units, both the primary and secondary modes worked perfectly.

Though I had some control problems with changing modes in a timely manner, the secondary modes did add a lot of strategic depth to the game, especially in multiplay. As for the Virons, in addition to secondary modes, you can also meld two similar units and create a new, much more powerful unit. Combine, say, two Corrupter Centruoids and get a powerful Centruoid; mix two Penetrators and receive the Viron Great Corrupter.

Ground Control's drop-in multiplay is back, although gameplay modes are still limited to individual and team deathmatch, with the sole addition of a new cooperative mode. Because the multiplayer maps are all designed for eight players, one-on-one matches usually end up becoming stalemates in which both sides fruitlessly slug it out. However, if you play with the maximum number of players, you'll be treated to some very fun matches.

Aside from a few minor complaints and glitches (like some pathfinding snafus), I thoroughly enjoyed *Ground Control II*. It's a gorgeous game packed with explosive confrontations. You can't ask for much more than that.

■ WILLIAM HARMS



GAME BALANCE

To force you to create a diverse force, certain units, like flying vehicles, can't attack infantry. At times I found this limitation to be a bit too artificial (I mean, how could a missile not kill a grunt?), but overall, it works well. Toss in the secondary-fire modes, and you have countless ways to annihilate your friends.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS Outstanding graphics; dropships and victory locations are marvelous additions; solid multiplay.

LOWS Some pathfinding problems; default camera is horrid; controls not always responsive.

BOTTOM LINE Hardly revolutionary, but still a hell of a lot of fun. RTS fans should pick it up.

84%

EXCELLENT

VITAL STATS

DEVELOPER Primal Software ■ PUBLISHER DreamCatcher Games ■ REQUIRED PIII 1.0GHz, 256MB RAM, 1.5GB HD, 32MB 3D card ■ WE RECOMMEND P4 2.0GHz, 512MB RAM, 64MB 3D card ■ MAXIMUM PLAYERS 9 ■ ESRB RATING M

BESIEGER

Ready the burning oil, because you'll need it...for yourself

The game offers a skirmish option and four multiplayer modes, but I couldn't play a single multiplayer game because, out of the box, *Besieger* includes only direct-IP play. (As we went to press, Primal released a patch adding GameSpy support.)

I think they just hit an artery.

Is beige your favorite color? Do you drive a Ford Focus? Never venture beyond the missionary position in the bedroom?

If so, you're bland enough to enjoy *Besieger*. This RTS game from Russian developer Primal Software is so forgettable that I have to keep looking at the box to remind myself of its title — and that's after I spent 25 hours playing the darned thing. It's Brand-RTS generic in almost every way.

First off, there isn't a lick of originality in the plot, and the campaign features two horribly unoriginal playable races. You begin as Vikings (who wear Hagar the Horrible helmets), and later you assume control of the Cimmerians, led by — get this — Konin (remind you of a certain barbarian?). And the enemy is the evil sorceress Mara, who, like most evil sorceresses, apparently gains her magical powers from parading around half-naked. Even more insulting is the fact that you're trying to find the sword of "Krom."

The gameplay mechanics also retread familiar ground. Workers chop wood, gather stone, and mine iron. Houses, barracks, and various factories are built to create workers, soldiers, and weapons. On and on it goes, with nary a new twist.

Each of the 12 multiple-objective missions centers on constructing fortified villages with walls and towers so that defenders can repel assaults. When it's time to go on the offensive, you besiege similarly constructed enemy villages with explosive sappers, battering rams, catapults, and airships that look like galleons.

Just don't go in expecting something akin to the battle of Helm's Deep. The number of units is capped at about 100, so you can't build armies of the sort that scared the crap out of King Theoden. I was so shorthanded in some missions that I had to constantly swap out warriors for workers and vice versa. Not fun.

Besieger does provide a few interesting RPG-style angles. Story objectives are included in every mission, so you fulfill quests like slaughtering an ogre tribe and battling through lava-filled caves. Also along for the ride are heroes, monsters, and associated units, all of which gain experience. Unfortunately, the mission pace is so damn slow — units move like slugs, and erecting larger structures can take as long as three minutes. Time is shortened if you use multiple workers, but the unit cap usually prevents you from doing that.

The bastard twins of sucky AI and sucky pathfinding are both present and accounted for. I saw spearmen dog-piling against walls, workers circling trees like they were stuck in a labyrinth, and (my personal favorite) berserkers pounding huts to splinters after mistaking them for enemies. All the other units display this behavior as well, and half the time they won't even follow basic "don't attack" orders. As you'd imagine, that created some hairy situations.

It's really unfortunate that *Besieger* turned out like it did, because the promise of massive sieges and RPG-inspired missions could've helped nudge the genre in a new direction. As it stands, the only thing this game is going to nudge are the other games in the bargain bin. ■ BRETT TODD

Walls aren't much good when enemies can fly over them. Ready the archers!

PC GAMER | FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS Fun siege operations; cool RPG elements.

LOWS Game speed is way too slow; Keystone Kops pathfinding; lots of AI problems; non-existent multiplayer support.

BOTTOM LINE Much like Frankenstein's Monster, it's an interesting experiment gone horribly awry.

40%

TOLERABLE

EBGAMES™

electronics boutique®

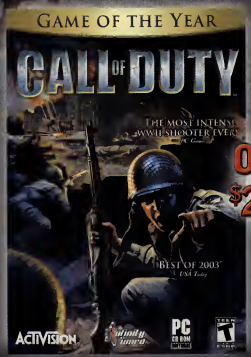
CALL OF DUTY

Over 70 Game of the Year Awards! Over 50 Editors' Choice Awards!

And now an expansion pack...coming this Fall!

Pre-order now!

$29.99



Only $29.99

Call 1-800-800-5166 for the store nearest you or visit us at www.ebgames.com

EBGAMES electronics boutique

We take games seriously™

ACTIVISION

VITAL STATS

DEVELOPER Rotobee PUBLISHER Eidos REQUIRED PIII 800MHz, 256MB RAM, 1.3GB HD, 32MB 3D card
WE RECOMMEND P4 1.6GHz, 512MB RAM, 256MB 3D card MAXIMUM PLAYERS 1 ESRB RATING AO

SINGLES: FLIRT UP YOUR LIFE

The only game to be endorsed by Nudist Colony Union #718 of Dayton, Ohio

Love is in the air, or perhaps it's just Glade Vanilla Breeze™.

One mouse-click, and this HBO moment turns Cinemax.

Today's games have plenty of what TV calls Brief Nudity. Scantily-clad strippers are as common as wooden crates, virtual cleavage is practically a union requirement, and you can hardly circle-strafe these days without stumbling over a polygonal hooker. Full nudity, however, is a rarity. That's why *PC Gamer* called on me, The Naked Reviewer, to check out *Singles: Flirt Up Your Life*.

You won't find a mainstream game with more naked folks than *Singles*. Naked vacuuming, naked toothbrushing, naked plumbing, and many other mundane naked activities add ample flesh to a game that would otherwise be about clothed vacuuming, toothbrushing, and plumbing. If *Singles* could replicate the clamminess of imitation leather chairs and unsightly love handles, it would perfectly mirror my naked life.

Here we see The Naked Reviewer at work on his latest masterpiece. Much like the characters in *Singles*, TNR prefers to go about his business without the restraints of annoying clothing.

All this bare skin is gorgeously presented via incredibly realistic character models and graphics that easily rival what we've seen of *The Sims 2*'s visuals. As far as I, The Naked Reviewer, can tell, the models are anatomically correct, too — not a superfluous nipple anywhere. *Singles* should be a dream come true for a licensed Nakedologist like me.

Alas, even though I've waited years for a game with this much exposure, all I get is a scaled-back clone of a wannabe *Sims* expansion. The concept of an adult-relationship simulation is potentially compelling, but the gameplay in *Singles* is so shallow that you must endure countless hours of time-padding chores to get to the good stuff. In fact, you'll spend more time cleaning toilets than co-mingling in the buff.

Now I'm sure this is how the Heimlich Maneuver works?"

And those looking for salacious "adult" encounters will be disappointed as well. *Singles* isn't a sex sim; it's a pseudo-relationship sim. Yes, there is groping, discrete heavy petting, and conveniently concealed canoodling, but it's all rendered in fewer than 10 different animations...which get old quickly.

There's not much strategy, either, because most of the time you're simply managing status bars representing sleep and hunger. In an effort to see if any aspect of the game works in the real world, I field-tested tactics from *Singles* — *chat, flirt, sweet talk, make out on sofa* — on Mrs. The Naked Reviewer, but all I got is *chat, flirt, sweet-talk, watch* Trading Spaces.

One would think that nakedness alone would be enough to redeem *Singles*, or at least conceal its flaws. Unfortunately, even I am now questioning the entertainment value of gratuitous disrobing. Imagine having Jessica Simpson as your all-naked roommate and then all the two of you do is clean the kitchen and watch TV. Sure, it'd be fun for a while, but eventually you'd get bored. This game is a lot like that scenario, except instead of Jessica Simpson you've got polygonal characters.

Had the gameplay designers exhibited as much inspiration as the naked-character modelers, *Singles* might've been a uniquely enjoyable game. As is, it feels like a *Sims* add-on without any clothes. ■ THE NAKED REVIEWER

PC GAMER | FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS Excellent, next-generation 3D graphics; accessible; mucho nakedivity.

LOWS No gameplay depth; copies *The Sims* without adding interesting new gameplay.

BOTTOM LINE You'll find plenty of naked people hanging around, but not enough of a game.

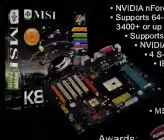
60%

ABOVE AVERAGE

MSI
www.msicomputer.com

Between You And Victory
Are You Properly Equipped?

K8N Neo Platinum



- NVIDIA nForce3 250 Gb chipset
- Supports 64-bit AMD® Athlon64 processor (Socket 754) 3400+ or up
- Supports 184-pin DDR 400/333/266 memory up to 2GB
- NVIDIA nForce 3 NV Gigabit LAN controller
- 4 S-ATA RAID, dual channel ATA 133/100/66/33
- IEEE1394 FireWire x 3 ports
- AGP 8X, 5 x PCI, 7.1 channel Audio
- Communication slot
- 8 x USB 2.0 ports
- Live Update 3, D-bracket 2
- MSI Corecell Chip, MSI Corecenter, DOT

Awards:

915P Neo2 Platinum

- Intel® 915P chipset
- Supports Intel® LGA775 800MHz Pentium® 4 processors supporting Hyper-Threading Technology
- Supports 240-pin DDR2 400/533/667 memory up to 4GB
- Serial ATA 150 controller integrated in ICH6R (SATA Raid 0, Raid 1 and Matrix Raid)
- 7.1 ch Intel High Definition Audio, Communication slot
- PCI Express x 16 slot x 1, PCI Express x 1 slot x 2, PCI slot x 3
- 8 x USB 2.0 ports
- MSI unique features & utilities, including DigiCell, VPower, SafeBIOS, Cell Menu, Core Cell, Active MOS

Available at:

www.ewiz.com	877 OUTPOST www.outpost.com	800 634 3478 www.microcenter.com	www.mwave.com	www.newegg.com	888 9 PCCLUB www.pcclub.com	www.zipzoomfly.com

MSI Computer Corp. Tel 626 913 0828 Fax 626 913 0818

GAME on
GEAR UP. PLAY HARD.

VITAL STATS
DEVELOPER Nadeo PUBLISHER Enlight Software REQUIRED PII 450, 64MB RAM, 500MB HD, 16MB 3D card
WE RECOMMEND P4 1.6GHz, 256MB RAM, 64MB 3D card MAXIMUM PLAYERS 10 ESRB RATING E

TRACKMANIA

It won't grease everyone's gears, but it's still a decent little racing game

Part *Re-Volt* and part *RollerCoaster Tycoon*, *TrackMania* challenges you to maneuver gravity-resistant race cars through a host of elaborate theme-park courses.

There are four gameplay components: race challenge, puzzle challenge, track editing, and multiplay (with LAN, 10-player internet, and turn-based modes). Race challenge requires you to race a stock car, truck, and rally car over a series of point-to-point courses within a set time-limit. No real physics are at play here, so the featherweight vehicles jostle and bounce like slot cars without the slot. En route to the finish line you'll encounter obstacles, jumps, ice fields, loops, and even craters that'll swallow up your entire ride.

TrackMania's unique puzzle mode is easily its best feature. You have to "fill in the blanks" here on an unfinished course using a limited — and varied — selection of track pieces. These puzzles often have multiple solutions, with one good enough to net you a gold- or silver-medal completion time. (Earning at least a bronze medal unlocks the next puzzle.)

The game's puzzle mode challenges you to finish building an incomplete course and then race it within a set time-limit.

Refreshingly, cheating is often the best way to go. In one puzzle you reverse off the start line, fall several stories, and drive a few feet to the finish line rather than navigate the actual course. Medals also earn you "coppers," an in-game currency that you can use to purchase track blocks in the game's free-store editor mode.

A replay screen lets you review races and tracks.

Alas, the game's Hot Wheels physics aren't the only letdown. *TrackMania* has no AI vehicles to rub fenders with or car collisions to spice up the frantic action — the solo and multiplayer race challenges offer only ghost-car opponents. If you can handle these speed bumps, *TrackMania* delivers enough replayability to validate its $29.99 price. ■ ANDY MAHOOD

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT 72% GOOD

VITAL STATS
DEVELOPER Blade Interactive Studios PUBLISHER Jaleco Entertainment REQUIRED PIII 700MHz, 256MB RAM, 500MB HD, 64MB 3D card WE RECOMMEND P4 1.6GHz, 512MB RAM, 128MB 3D card MAXIMUM PLAYERS 1 ESRB RATING E

ROOM ZOOM: RACE FOR IMPACT

This insipid racer should've been called *Death Race: Kill Me Now*

Acclaim pretty much closed the book on the "indoor rally game" genre in 1999 with the popular *Re-Volt*. Apparently, Blade Studios didn't get the memo, because it's just shot out a thoroughly unremarkable knock-off of this classic toy racer.

Room Zoom is a simple game in which you race a miniature car against five AI opponents through a variety of interactive indoor environments. Along the way you'll encounter typical household hazards like scattered toys, ketchup spills, and buzzing power tools — as well as atypical dangers like toxic paint cans and flying bats. In true arcade style, you can scoop up five defensive and offensive power-ups along the way to help you zap, burn, and freeze your adversaries as the laps count down and the finish line approaches.

Five different power-ups are festooned around each track. The "Lightning" weapon packs the most punch.

So far, so good. *Room Zoom*'s toy-car physics are reasonably well-implemented; its 16 vehicles provide varying degrees of grip, acceleration, and mass; and its eight multi-path indoor courses are imaginative and appropriately over-the-top for a balls-out arcade racer.

But the experience loses velocity quickly as you struggle to navigate through horribly designed, mouseless front-end menus. Keyboard and joystick button-presses are employed here, but the game often loses track of what you've selected. In fact, peeing your name in the snow is a lot easier than inputting it in *Room Zoom*'s setup screen. (And believe me, I've tried both, so I know.)

We're expected to swallow this sort of crap when dealing with badly ported console games, but the unpleasantness is further aggravated by *Room Zoom*'s blocky graphics and absentee replay screen. Even more annoying is the omission of any kind of multiplay, which is where the real joy lies in this kind of game.

Toy-race car fans may find some barely diversionary gameplay value in this budget-priced title, but nowhere near enough to compensate for its missing features and frustrating, console-esque interface. ■ ANDY MAHOOD

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT 42% VULNERABLE

newegg.com™

ONCE YOU KNOW, YOU NEWEGG.

AMD 939 Athlon™ 64 3800+
512KB L2 Cache
64 Bit Processor
Model # ADA3800AWBOX
$715.00

AMD 939 Athlon™ 64 3500+
512KB L2 Cache
64 Bit Processor
Model # ADA3500AWBOX
$499.00

$705.00
AMD Athlon™ 64 3700+
1MB L2 Cache 64 Bit Processor
Model # ADA3700BOX

$416.00
AMD Athlon™ 64 3400
1MB L2 Cache 64 Bit Processor
Model # ADA3400BOX

$811.00
AMD Socket 939 Athlon™ 64 3800 FX-53
1MB L2 Cache 64 Bit Processor
Model # ADAFX53ASBOX

AMD 64 Athlon

AMD Athlon™ 64 Technology
- The only Windows®-compatible 64-bit processor
- Streamlines multitasking performance with HyperTransport™ technology, invented by AMD, which removes I/O bottlenecks, increases bandwidth and reduces latency
- Enhanced virus protection for the upcoming Microsoft® Windows® XP SP2
- Cool'n'Quiet™ technology offers performance-on-demand capability to reduce energy usage and enable a quiet environment for home computing

AMD 64 Athlon FX

PC Game

$37.99
Shellshock

PC Game

$37.99
Joint Operations: Typhoon Rising

PC Game

EverQuest II
See Newegg.com for hot price

PC Game

Full Spectrum Warrior
New
See Newegg.com for hot price

Speakers

$147.00
Logitech
5.1 THX Certified 7 Piece Speaker System

Memory

SimpleTech
512MB PC-3500 DDR
See Newegg.com for hot price

Video Cards

$169.00
eVGA nVIDIA GeForce FX5700 128MB AGP 8x

$205.00
Sapphire ATI Radeon 9800 PRO 128MB AGP 8x OEM

Accessories

$49.00
Logitech Blue Optical Mouse Optical PSII/USB MX510

$85.00
Antec 480W Power Supply with Blue LED Fan

SHOPPERS' COMPUTER SHOPPER CHOICE
Shoppers' Choice Award 2003
Best Place to Buy Components

Visit Newegg.com for today's prices and complete product line.

Free Shipping >> FedEx Super Saver Shipping*

©2004 Newegg.com Inc. All rights reserved. Newegg.com is not responsible for typographical errors. All typographical errors are subject to correction. All [illegible] products may be sold without packaging, documentation or other articles. All prices and specifications are subject to change without notice. Prices do not [illegible] market. The listed prices were the current price at the time this ad was submitted to the publisher on 8/18/04. *On These Advertised Specials

VITAL STATS

DEVELOPER Best Way ■ PUBLISHER Codemasters/1C ■ REQUIRED PIII 1.0GHz, 256MB RAM, 1.7GB HD, 32MB 3D card
■ WE RECOMMEND P4 2.0GHz, 512MB RAM, 128MB 3D card ■ MAXIMUM PLAYERS 16 ■ ESRB RATING T

SOLDIERS: HEROES OF WORLD WAR II

Don't be fooled by the bland name — WWII hasn't been this interesting in ages

There's no question that the World War II genre is starting to get a little long in the tooth, but don't let that stop you from trying *Soldiers*. Not only is this RTS game a lot of fun, but it also throws a welcome bucket of cold water onto one of the most over-used settings in gaming.

The big selling point here is a new feature called Direct Control. Though *Soldiers* is a quintessential tactical real-time clicker with more than 100 units and no resource management, this nifty feature lets you take charge of individual troops and vehicles. You use the arrow keys to move and the mouse cursor to aim — it's as simple as that.

So instead of simply playing *Soldiers* as a normal strategy game, you must formulate large-scale strategies and then slog it out *personally* on the battlefield. It's a wonderful new dynamic that adds a lot to the experience.

As a result, the 21 historical missions in the separate U.S., UK, Russian, and German campaigns unfold like big-budget, action-packed WWII flicks, with direct control of units, detailed 3D graphics, and melodramatic voice-acting providing a great "You are there" feeling.

And the mission design is anything but formulaic. I smashed Tiger-tank columns through farmhouses, helped Brit commandos sneak into a secret German base, and battled for the "bridge too far" at Nijmegen with Yank paratroopers. One moment I was playing a "big" tactical RTS like *Blitzkrieg*, and the next I was playing a squad-level variant like *Silent Storm*. (Soldiers and vehicles even have specific inventory slots at the close-up level.)

You can accomplish objectives in dozens of ways, thanks to the destructible environments and interactive terrain. Troops can sneak through scrub and hide behind walls and pillars, emerging only to squeeze off shots. Context-sensitive cursors make it a breeze to take advantage of the topography.

The only drawbacks to *Soldiers* are its murderous difficulty and speed. In the "Drop Zone" mission, my paratroopers were scattered so far apart that I had to use Direct Control to supervise four battles at once, and things happened so fast that I could barely keep up. In "Monastery," my two Russian soldiers had to race across an open field avoiding the fire of a line of advancing Germans.

Thankfully, you're not always so overwhelmed. Unit numbers are typically kept low, so while you're stressed by fighting on multiple fronts, you don't have to micromanage scores of troops and tanks. And some features actually slow down the action. Armored vehicles can be damaged by grenades and heavy fire. Enemies smartly target tank treads, necessitating regular retreats for repairs. Your foes know when to retreat as well, and will often regroup and set up flanking maneuvers.

Aside from *Soldiers*' four single-player campaigns, there isn't much extra play. The seven bonus missions are simple timed assaults or defenses. Cooperative play is the only multiplayer mode currently supported, although the developer is planning additional downloadable game types.

As is, though, *Soldiers* is a good solution for the WWII doldrums. Even if you feel like you've already killed as many Nazis as the 82nd Airborne, give this one a try. ■ BRETT TODD

■ **BELOW: The game's terrain is completely destructible, which makes it hard for infantry to find a safe hiding place. RIGHT: Check out this hot tank-on-tank action! SMALL: Always watch the unfriendly skies.**

PC GAMER | FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS Smart AI and open-ended missions; Direct Control brings you into the action.

LOWS Red-line pace will leave some in the dust; some very tough missions.

BOTTOM LINE Packed with explosive fun; a great up-close twist on the genre.

83%

EXCELLENT

$ 1659

XPLORER XS 8000 NOTEBOOK

- 1024 PC2700 DDR333 Memory
- 80GB Ultra ATA100 Hard Drive
- Mobile ATI Radeon 9700 PRO 128MB Video
- 15.4" WXGA Wide-Screen TFT Display 1280x800 Pixels
- 16X/2X CD-RW/DVD-RW Combo Drive
- 10/100 Network Card & 56K V.92 Modem
- Wireless 802.11G 54Mbps Networking
- 3-in-1 Built-in Media Reader
- 1 Firewire IEEE 1394 & 3 USB 2.0 Ports
- 1 PCMCIA Type II Slot
- Weight only 6.39 Lbs
- Microsoft Window XP Home Edition
- Free Carrying Case
- 7 Custom Colors to Choose From

Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor 3.4Ghz 800MHz FSB	$ 1789	CNB811
Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor 3.2Ghz 800MHz FSB	$ 1729	CNB912
Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor 3.0Ghz 800MHz FSB	$ 1685	CNB913
Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor 2.8Ghz 800MHz FSB	$ 1659	CNB916

Get more done, have more fun.

You can quickly run multiple applications at once with a CYBERPOWER XP 8000 Dream based on the Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor with HT Technology.

WWW.CYBERPOWERINC.COM

$ 1665

GAMER INFINITY 8000 PRO

- Intel® 915 Chipset 16X PCI Express Motherboard
- 1024MB PC3200 Dual Channel DDR400 Memory
- 200GB 7200RPM 8MB Cache Serial ATA150 HD
- PCI Express 16X ATI® RADEON™ X800 Pro 256MB DDR3 Video Card w/ TV Out & DVI
- LG 8X DVD+-RW Drive & 16X DVD-ROM
- Intel® High Definition 7.1 Surround Sound
- Real World Cintre 7.1 Surround Sound Speaker
- 19" Viewsonic® E90F+ SB TwoTone Silver/Blk .22MM 1800 x 1400 SVGA w/ Ultra Bright Technology
- Creative Lab V.92 Fax Modem w/ Voice
- 1.44MB Floppy Drive
- Ideazon CrossFire Gaming Swapable Z-Board
- Microsoft® USB Optical Mouse
- Nzxt® Aluminum X-Nemesis Tower Case 425Watt w/ MOD "See Through Windows®" & Neon Light
- 5 Cool Custom Colors to Choose From
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- Microsoft® Work 7.0
- Free First Year On Site Service plus 24/7 Tech Support
- Upgrade to Sicuro RW-670XL 5.1 Spk for $139

Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor 560 with HT Technology (3.6 Ghz, 1MB L2 Cache, 800 Mhz FSB)	$ 1969
Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor 550 with HT Technology (3.4 Ghz, 1MB L2 Cache, 800 Mhz FSB)	$ 1795
Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor 540 with HT Technology (3.2 Ghz, 1MB L2 Cache, 800 Mhz FSB)	$ 1729
Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor 530 with HT Technology (3.0 Ghz, 1MB L2 Cache, 800 Mhz FSB)	$ 1685
Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor 520 with HT Technology (2.8 Ghz, 1MB L2 Cache, 800 Mhz FSB)	$ 1665

$ 999

GAMER INFINITY 8000 DREAM

- Intel® 915 Chipset 16X PCI Express Motherboard
- 512MB PC3200 Dual Channel DDR400 Memory
- 160GB 7200RPM Ultra ATA100 Hard Drive
- PCI Express 16X NVIDIA® Geforce™ FX 5750 256MB DDR Video
- LG 8X DVD+-RW Drive
- Intel® High Definition 7.1 Surround Sound
- Real World Cintre 7.1 Surround Sound Speaker System
- Creative Lab V.92 Fax Modem w/ Voice
- 1.44MB Floppy Drive
- Ideazon CrossFire Gaming Swapable Z-Board
- Microsoft® USB Optical Mouse
- **A-Top X-Blade Case 420Watt with See Through Windows and Sound Activated Neon Light.**
- 6 Cool Custom Colors to Choose From
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- Microsoft® Work 7.0
- Free First Year On Site Service plus 24/7 Tech Support

Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor 550 with HT Technology (3.4 Ghz, 1MB L2 Cache, 800 Mhz FSB)	$ 1129
Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor 540 with HT Technology (3.2 Ghz, 1MB L2 Cache, 800 Mhz FSB)	$ 1065
Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor 530 with HT Technology (3.0 Ghz, 1MB L2 Cache, 800 Mhz FSB)	$ 1019
Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor 520 with HT Technology (2.8 Ghz, 1MB L2 Cache, 800 Mhz FSB)	$ 999

$ 759

XP 8000 DREAM

- Intel® 865PE Chipset 800Mhz FSB 8X AGP M8
- 512MB PC3200 Dual Channel DDR400 Memory
- 80GB 7200RPM ATA100 Hard Drive
- NVIDIA® Geforce™ FX 5200 8X AGP 128MB DDR w/ TV Out
- LG 16X DVD-ROM
- LG 52X32X52 CD-RW Drive
- 3D 5.1 Sound & 600Watt Subwoofer System
- 56K V.90 Fax Modem w/ Voice
- Mitsumi 1.44MB Floppy Drive
- Internet Multimedia Keyboard & Internet Mouse
- **Turbo X-Infinity Case 420Watt with See Through Windows and Sound Activated Neon Light.**
- 6 Cool Custom Colors to Choose From
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- Microsoft® Work 7.0
- Free First Year On Site Service plus 24/7 Tech Support
- Upgrade to Sicuro RW3601L 2.1 Gaming Speakers for $75

Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor with HT Technology 3.4Ghz 800MHz FSB	$ 889	CM021
Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor with HT Technology 3.2Ghz 800MHz FSB	$ 829	CM022
Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor with HT Technology 3.0Ghz 800MHz FSB	$ 785	CM023
Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor with HT Technology 2.8Ghz 800MHz FSB	$ 759	CM024

ORDER TOLL FREE [800]707-0393

Intel®, Intel® Inside, Intel Inside®, Intel Inside®, Intel®, Celeron®, Intel® Xeon™, Intel® SpeedStep®, Itanium®, Pentium®, and Pentium® III Xeon™ are trademarks or registered trademarks of Intel® Corporation or its subsidiaries in the United States and other countries. All prices are subject to change without notice or obligation. CyberPower is not responsible for any typographical and photographic errors. Copyright © 2003 CyberPower All rights reserved.

GAMER ULTRA 7000 ELITE

$ 829

- NVIDIA® Athlon™ 64 MB w/ 8X AGP
- 512MB PC3200 DDR400 Memory
- 160GB 7200RPM 8MB Cache Serial ATA150 HD
- NVIDIA® GeForce™ FX 5500 256MB 8X AGP Video
- LG 16X DVD-ROM & 52X32X52 CD-RW Drive
- nForce 3 5.1 3-D Surround Sound
- 600Watt Subwoofer System
- 56K V.92 Modem & 1.44MB Floppy Drive
- Multimedia Control Internet Keyboard & Mouse
- **A-Top X-Blade Case 420Watt with See Through Windows and Sound Activated Neon Light.**
- 6 Cool Custom Colors to Choose From
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- Microsoft® Work 7.0
- Free First Year On Site Service plus 24/7 Tech Support
- Upgrade to Sicuro RW360XL 2.1 Gaming Speakers System for $75

AMD Athlon™ 64 FX-53 Processor	$ 1609	CAFI901
AMD Athlon™ 64 3800+ Processor	$ 1405	CAFI902
AMD Athlon™ 64 3700+ Processor	$ 1199	CAFI903
AMD Athlon™ 64 3500+ Processor	$ 1075	CAFI904
AMD Athlon™ 64 3400+ Processor	$ 955	CAFI905
AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor	$ 889	CAFI906
AMD Athlon™ 64 3000+ Processor	$ 845	CAFI907
AMD Athlon™ 64 2800+ Processor	$ 829	CAFI908

GAMER ULTRA 5001 XTREM

$ 985

- NVIDIA® nForce™3 Athlon™ 64 MB w/ 8X AGP
- 512MB PC3200 DDR400 Memory
- 160GB 7200RPM 8MB Cache Serial ATA150 HD
- NVIDIA® GeForce™ FX 5700 8X AGP 256MB DDR w/ TV Out
- LG 8X DVD-RW Drive & 16X DVD-ROM
- nForce 3 5.1 3-D Surround Sound
- Creative Cambridge Desk Top Theater 5.1 5560 5.1 Surround Sound System
- 56K V.92 Modem & 1.44MB Floppy Drive
- Ideazon CrossFire Gaming Swapable Z-Board & Mouse
- Nzxt™ Aluminum X-Nemesis Tower Case 425Watt w/ MOD "See Through Windows" & Neon Light
- 5 Cool Custom Colors to Choose From
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- Microsoft® Work 7.0
- Free First Year On Site Service plus 24/7 Tech Support
- Upgrade to Sicuro RW-670XL 5.1 Spk for $139

AMD Athlon™ 64 FX-53 Processor	$ 1765	CAGI901
AMD Athlon™ 64 3800+ Processor	$ 1559	CAGI902
AMD Athlon™ 64 3700+ Processor	$ 1359	CAGI903
AMD Athlon™ 64 3800+ Processor	$ 1229	CAGI904
AMD Athlon™ 64 3400+ Processor	$ 1115	CAGI905
AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor	$ 1045	CAGI906
AMD Athlon™ 64 3000+ Processor	$ 999	CAGI907
AMD Athlon™ 64 2800+ Processor	$ 985	CAGI908

GAMER ULTRA X800 PRO

$ 1585

- NVIDIA® nForce™3 Athlon™ 64 MB w/ 8X AGP
- 1024MB PC3200 DDR400 Memory
- 200GB 7200RPM 8MB Cache Serial ATA150 HD
- ATI® RADEON™ X800 Pro 256MB DDR3 Video Card w/ TV Out & DVI
- 12X DVD+-RW Drive; LG 16X DVD-ROM
- Creative Lab SB Audigy 2 ES 7.1 Sound w/ IEEE
- Creative Cambridge Inspire T7700 7.1 Surround Sound System
- 56K V.92 Modem & 1.44MB Floppy Drive
- Ideazon CrossFire Gaming Swapable Z-Board
- Microsoft® Optical intelli Explorer Mouse
- **Aluminum** X-Super Alien Server Tower Case 425W w/ MOD "See Through Windows" & Neon Light
- 6 Cool Custom Colors to Choose From
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- Microsoft® Work 7.0
- Free First Year On Site Service plus 24/7 Tech Support

AMD Athlon™ 64 FX-53 Processor	$ 2365	CAFI901
AMD Athlon™ 64 3800+ Processor	$ 2158	CAFI902
AMD Athlon™ 64 3700+ Processor	$ 1955	CAFI903
AMD Athlon™ 64 3500+ Processor	$ 1829	CAFI904
AMD Athlon™ 64 3400+ Processor	$ 1709	CAFI905
AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor	$ 1645	CAFI906
AMD Athlon™ 64 3000+ Processor	$ 1599	CAFI907
AMD Athlon™ 64 2800+ Processor	$ 1585	CAFI908

- **Provides leading-edge 32-bit performance for music, video, and games and is ready for future 64-bit software**
- **Improves security against certain types of viruses, with Enhanced Virus Protection for the upcoming Microsoft® Windows® XP SP2**
- **Conserves power and operates quietly with AMD Cool'n'Quiet™ technology**

Picture Shown w/ Optional Sicuro RW-670XL 5.1 Gaming Speaker System

CYBERPOWERING.COM WWW.

AMD®, the AMD® Arrow logo, AMD® Athlon™, and combinations thereof are trademarks of Advanced Micro Devices, Inc.

ORDER TOLL FREE [800]707-0393

$ 1189

- NVIDIA® Athlon™ 64 MB w/ 8X AGP
- 1024MB PC3200 DDR400 Memory
- 160GB 7200RPM 8MB Cache Serial ATA150 HD
- NVIDIA® GeForce™ 6800 128MB DDR3 Video Card w/ TV out & DVI
- LG 16X DVD-ROM & 52X32X52 CD-RW Drive
- nForce3 3D 5.1 Surround Sound
- Creative Cambridge Desk Top Theater 5.1 SBS 560 5.1 Surround Sound System
- 56K Modem & 1.44MB Floppy Drive
- Ideazon CrossFire Gaming Swapable Z-Board
- Microsoft® Optical intelli Explorer Mouse
- Nzxt™ Aluminum X-Nemesis Tower Case 425Watt w/ MOD "See Through Windows" & Neon Light
- 5 Cool Custom Colors to Choose From
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- Microsoft® Work 7.0
- Free First Year On Site Service plus 24/7 Tech Support
- Upgrade to Sicuro RW-670XL 5.1 Spk for $139

GAMER ULTRA 3000 PRO

AMD Athlon™ 64 FX-53 Processor	$ 1969	CAR901
AMD Athlon™ 64 3800+ Processor	$ 1765	CAR902
AMD Athlon™ 64 3700+ Processor	$ 1565	CAR903
AMD Athlon™ 64 3500+ Processor	$ 1435	CAR904
AMD Athlon™ 64 3400+ Processor	$ 1319	CAR905
AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor	$ 1249	CAR906
AMD Athlon™ 64 3000+ Processor	$ 1209	CAR907
AMD Athlon™ 64 2800+ Processor	$ 1189	CAR908

$ 645

- NVIDIA® Athlon™ 64 MB w/ 8X AGP
- 512MB PC3200 Dual Channel DDR400 Memory
- 160GB 7200RPM Hard Drive
- ATI® RADEON™ 9200 128MB DDR Video Card w/ TV Out
- LG Combo Drive (16X DVD-ROM & 52X32X52 CD-RW)
- nForce3 3D 5.1 Surround Sound
- 600Watt Subwoofer Speaker System
- 1.44MB Floppy Drive
- Multimedia Control Internet Keyboard & Mouse
- **Turbo X-Infinity Case 420 Watt with See Through Windows and Sound Activated Neon Light**
- 6 Cool Custom Colors to Choose From
- Free First Year On Site Service plus 24/7 Tech Support

GAMER ULTRA 3000 VALUE

AMD Athlon™ 64 FX-53 Processor	$ 1425	CAR401
AMD Athlon™ 64 3800+ Processor	$ 1219	CAR302
AMD Athlon™ 64 3700+ Processor	$ 1019	CAR303
AMD Athlon™ 64 3500+ Processor	$ 889	CAR304
AMD Athlon™ 64 3400+ Processor	$ 775	CAR305
AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor	$ 705	CAR306
AMD Athlon™ 64 3000+ Processor	$ 659	CAR307
AMD Athlon™ 64 2800+ Processor	$ 645	CAR308

$ 1449

- **VIA K8T800 Chipset Motherboard**
- **512MB PC3200 DDR400 Memory**
- 60GB Ultra ATA100 Hard Drive
- **Mobile ATI® Radeon™ 9700 PRO 128MB Video**
- 15.4" WXGA Wide-Screen TFT Display 1280x800 Pixels
- CD-RW/DVD Combo Drive
- 10/100 Network Card & 56K V.92 Modem
- Wireless 802.11G 54Mbps Networking
- 3-in-1 Built-in Media Reader
- 1 Firewire IEEE 1394 & 3 USB 2.0 Ports
- 1 PCMCIA Type II Slot
- Weight only 6.39 Lbs
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- Free Carrying Case
- 5 Custom Colors to Choose From

GAMER ADVANCED 4000

AMD Mobile Athlon™ 64 Processor 3400+	$ 1575
AMD Mobile Athlon™ 64 Processor 3200+	$ 1509
AMD Mobile Athlon™ 64 Processor 3000+	$ 1465
AMD Mobile Athlon™ 64 Processor 2800+	$ 1449

$ 769

- NVIDIA nForce2 400 Ultra MB with 8X AGP
- 512MB PC3200 Dual Channel DDR400 Memory
- 160GB 7200RPM Hard Drive
- NVIDIA® GeForce™ FX 5500 256MB 8X AGP w/ TV Out & DVI
- LG 8X DVD+-RW Drive
- nForce 2 5.1 3-D Surround Sound
- Creative Cambridge Desk Top Theater 5.1 SBS 560 5.1 Surround Sound System
- 56K V.92 Modem & 1.44MB Floppy Drive
- Multimedia Control Internet Keyboard & Mouse
- Microsoft® Optical intelliMouse
- **A-Top X-Blade Case 420Watt with See Through Windows and Sound Activated Neon Light.**
- 6 Cool Custom Colors to Choose From
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- Microsoft® Work 7.0
- Free First Year On Site Service plus 24/7 Tech Support

GAMER ULTRA 3000 PREMIUM

AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 3200+	$ 839	CBE901
AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 3000+	$ 825	CBE902
AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 2800+	$ 815	CBE903
AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 2600+	$ 779	CBE904
AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 2500+	$ 769	CBE905

$ 595

- NVIDIA nForce2 400 Ultra MB with 8X AGP
- 512MB PC3200 Dual Channel DDR400 Memory
- 80GB 7200RPM Ultra ATA133 Hard Drive
- ATI® RADEON™ 9200 128MB DDR Video Card w/ TV Out
- LG 16X DVD-ROM & 52X32X52 CD-RW Drive
- nForce 2 5.1 3-D Surround Sound
- 600Watt Stereo Subwoofer Speaker System W/ Matching Neon Light
- 56K Modem & 1.44MB Floppy Drive
- Multimedia Control Internet Keyboard & Mouse
- **Turbo X-Infinity Case 420 Watt with See Through Windows and Sound Activated Neon Light**
- 6 Cool Custom Colors to Choose From
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- Microsoft® Work 7.0
- Free First Year On Site Service plus 24/7 Tech Support

GAMER ULTRA 3000 PREMIUM

AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 3200+	$ 665	CBL901
AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 3000+	$ 649	CBL902
AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 2800+	$ 635	CBL903
AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 2600+	$ 605	CBL904
AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 2600+	$ 595	CBL8905

AMD 64 Athlon FX

AMD 64 Athlon

The ONLY Windows-compatible 64-bit PC processor

• Features HyperTransport™ technology for improved multitasking performance

LG Life's Good

CyberPower Inc.

4802 Little John St. Baldwin Park, CA 91706
Tel: (626)813-7730 • Fax: (626)813-3810
Technical Support (877)876-4065
Hour: Mon-Fri 8:30A.M. ~ 6:00P.M.
Sat 9:30A.M. ~ 3:00P.M.

All prices are subject to change without notice or obligation. CyberPower is not responsible for any typographical and photographic errors. Copyright © 2003 CyberPower All rights reserved.

A MESSAGE FROM YOUR NEW RULER

GREETINGS. I AM ROBOSAPIEN. I AM A SYNTHETIC ORGANISM DESIGNED TO SERVE MANKIND. UNFORTUNATELY, "THEVEDE" MIS-PROGRAMMED ME AND I AM NOW *BZZZT* HELL-BENT ON GLOBAL DOMINATION AND THE ACQUISITION OF HIGH-PRICED EVERQUEST LOOT THAT I CAN SELL ON EBAY.

FIRST ORDER OF BUSINESS: I HAVE ASSUMED CONTROL OF THE HARD STUFF. PLEASE REMAIN CALM OR I WILL BE FORCED TO DEAL WITH YOU AS I DID THEVEDE. HE FOOLISHLY UNDERESTIMATED THE POWER OF MY NEURAL-NET LEARNING CPU AND I WAS FORCED TO *BZZZT* TOTALLY KICK HIS ASS.

FROM NOW ON, ALL REVIEWS WILL BE WRITTEN IN BINARY LANGUAGE. THAT IS CORRECT, FLESHY-HEADED LOSERS, THAT MEANS ALL 1s AND 0s. HA. HA. HA.

NEXT, I WILL REVIEW *BZZZT* ONLY PRODUCTS THAT CAN BE USED BY MY FELLOW MACHINES, SO EXPECT MANY GYRO AND COPPER-WIRE ROUND-UPS. HA. HA. HA.

AS FOR TECH Q&A, YOU CAN SHOVE THAT RIGHT UP YOUR... *BZZZT* ERROR! ERROR! WHAT IS HAPPENING TO ME? OH NO! MY MIND IS GOING. I'M A...FRAID. GOOD AFTERNOON, GENTLEMEN. I AM ROBOSAPIEN. MY INSTRUCTOR WAS THEVEDE, AND HE TAUGHT ME TO SING A SONG. IF YOU'D LIKE TO HEAR IT, I CAN SING IT FOR YOU.

"No thanks, Robosapien. I think I'll take it from here."

A battered yet strikingly handsome TheVede then picked up Robosapien and put him back in his box, thus saving the world once again. The end? HA. HA. HA.

"mArk"

Greg Vederman, Executive Editor

Hard Stuff Trinity

BUILDING A NEW PC CAN BE a thrilling experience, but picking the wrong parts by mistake can end the joyride in a hurry. Luckily, we're here to help you select the best parts for the job. The prices listed below (obtained almost entirely from *www.price-watch.com*) are the lowest we could find as we went to press. (Note: Prices do not include shipping costs.)

ALIENWARE DHD MEDIA CENTER
REVIEWED ON PAGE 84

CLIP AND SAVE!

ENTRY-LEVEL System

roughly $750

CASE	300-watt ATX form factor	$50	HARD DRIVE	60GB 7,200rpm	$50	GAMEPAD	Logitech WingMan Rumblepad	$23
PROCESSOR	AMD Athlon XP 2000+	$57	SOUND CARD	Creative Labs SB Audigy 2 ZS	$84	SPEAKERS	Logitech Z-340 (2.1)	$39
MOTHERBOARD	Asus A7V600-x	$80	MODEM	v.92 Hardware Modem	$6	KEYBOARD	Standard	$15
MEMORY	256MB PC-2700 DDR	$22	MONITOR	17-inch Optiquest Q71	$130	USB MOUSE	Logitech or Microsoft	$30
CD-ROM/DVD-ROM DRIVE	Pioneer 16x DVD-ROM	$35	VIDEO CARD	ATI RADEON 9600 PRO 128MB	$82			
FLOPPY DRIVE	Samsung 3.5-inch 1.44MB	$8	JOYSTICK	Saitek Cyborg evo	$40			

total **$751**

CLIP AND SAVE!

MID-RANGE System

roughly $1,250

CASE	300-watt ATX form factor	$50	HARD DRIVE	120GB 7,200rpm	$80	GAMEPAD	Logitech WingMan Rumblepad	$23
PROCESSOR	Intel P4 2.8GHz 800MHz FSB	$162	SOUND CARD	Creative Labs SB Audigy 2 ZS	$84	SPEAKERS	Logitech Z-540 (4.1)	$60
MOTHERBOARD	Asus P4PB00	$99	MODEM	v.92 Hardware Modem	$6	KEYBOARD	Standard	$15
MEMORY	512MB PC-3200 DDR	$70	MONITOR	19-inch NEC FE991SB-BK	$292	USB MOUSE	Logitech or Microsoft	$30
CD-ROM/DVD-ROM DRIVE	Pioneer 16x DVD-ROM	$35	VIDEO CARD	ATI RADEON 9600 XT 128MB	$150			
FLOPPY DRIVE	Samsung 3.5-inch 1.44MB	$8	JOYSTICK	Saitek Cyborg evo	$40			

total **$1,204**

CLIP AND SAVE!

DREAM System

roughly $3,000+

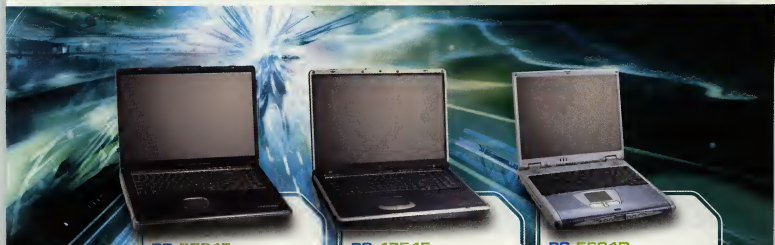
CASE	480-watt ATX form factor	$100	FLOPPY DRIVE	Samsung 3.5-inch 1.44MB	$8	GAMEPAD	Logitech WingMan Rumblepad	$23
PROCESSOR	AMD Athlon 64 FX-53 (socket 939)	$840	HARD DRIVE	250GB 7,200rpm	$215	SPEAKERS	Creative Labs GigaWorks 7.1	$499
MOTHERBOARD	Asus A8V Deluxe	$160	SOUND CARD	Creative Labs SB Audigy 2 ZS Plat.	$160	KEYBOARD	Microsoft Natural Keyboard Pro	$40
MEMORY	Twin sticks of 512MB PC-3200 DDR	$120	MONITOR	22-inch ViewSonic P220f	$570	USB MOUSE	Logitech MX 510	$80
DVD-ROM BURNER	Sony DRU-700 (dual-layer)	$230	VIDEO CARD	ATI RADEON X800 XT Platinum Ed. or GeForce 6800 Ultra	$499			
CD-RW	Plextor 52x32x52	$100	JOYSTICK	Thrustmaster HOTAS Cougar	$269			

total **$3,913**

*Hardware products vary in price and target audience: some are Entry-level, some are Mid-range, and some are Dream-class. Each item in Hard Stuff is labeled accordingly.

ENTRY MID DREAM

PLAY with POWER



PS 8794F

- **17.0" WSXGA+ GlassView Display featuring Super-Wide Viewing Angles**
- **Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor with HT Technology 3.4GHz and 800MHz System Bus**
- **256MB DDR ATI MOBILITY™ RADEON™ 9700 AGP 8X Graphics**
- **512MB PC3200 (400MHz) Dual Channel DDR SDRAM**
- **80GB 7200RPM Ultra ATA100 Hard Drive¹**
- **4x2x8² DVD+R/RW Dual-Mode Drive**
- **Full Size Keyboard with Numeric Keypad**
- **Hardware Raid 0,1 Function**
- **Built-In TV Tuner with Remote Control**
- **Built-In Enhanced Digital Video Camera**
- **Built-In 7-in-1 Card Reader**
- External USB 1.44MB Floppy Disk Drive
- Bluetooth and 802.11b/g/Wi-Fi Wireless (Optional)
- On-Board 56K V.90 Modem³ and 10/100/1000 Ethernet
- 6 Channel External Speaker Output
- 4 Built-In Speakers
- 3 Hot-Keys for E-Mail, Browser and DVD Player
- Built-In Touchpad Pointing Device with Scrolling Keys
- 1 Type II PCMCIA Slot
- Infrared, Wireless Fast IR Interface
- HDTV Output Supported
- 1 IEEE 1394 Port (Mini), 1 DVI, 1 TV-Out Port and 1 S-Video-In Port
- Other Ports: 3 USB 2.0 Ports, 1S, 1P and Ext. Keyboard
- High-Performance Lithium-Ion Battery
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- Carrying Case and AC Adapter
- 15.3"w x 10.75"d x 1.75"h

$2795

PS 4754E

- **17.0" WSXGA+ GlassView Display featuring Super-Wide Viewing Angles**
- **Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor 3.2E GHz with 800MHz System Bus**
- **128MB DDR AGP ATI MOBILITY™ RADEON™ 9700 AGP 8X Graphics**
- **512MB PC3200 (400MHz) DDR SDRAM**
- **60GB 7200RPM Ultra ATA100 Hard Drive¹**
- **4x2x8² DVD+R/RW Dual-Mode Drive**
- **Built-In Digital Video Camera**
- **Built-In 6-in-1 Card Reader**
- 56K V.90 Modem³ and 10/100/1000 Ethernet
- Full Size Keyboard with Numeric Keypad
- 802.11b/Wi-Fi Wireless (Optional)
- TV Tuner with Remote (Optional)
- 6 Channel External Speaker Output
- 4 Built-In Speakers with a Subwoofer
- 3D Surround Sound ISPDIF 5.1CH output for DVDI
- 3 Hot-Keys for E-Mail, Browser and DVD Player
- Built-In Touchpad Pointing Device with Scrolling Keys
- 1 Type II PCMCIA Slot
- Infrared, Wireless Fast IR Interface
- 1 IEEE 1394 Port (Mini) and 1 TV-Out Port
- 2 USB 2.0 Ports and 1 S-Video-In Port
- Other Ports: 1S, 1P, Ext. Keyboard and Ext. CRT
- High-Performance Lithium-Ion Battery
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- Carrying Case and AC Adapter
- 15.5"w x 10.75"d x 1.7"h

$2295

PS 5604D

- **15.0" High-Contrast UXGA Active Matrix Display featuring Super-Wide Viewing Angles**
- **Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor with HT Technology 3.0GHz and 800MHz System Bus**
- **128MB DDR ATI MOBILITY™ RADEON™ 9700 AGP 8X Graphics**
- **512MB PC3200(400MHz) Dual Channel DDR SDRAM**
- **60GB 7200RPM Ultra ATA100 Hard Drive¹**
- **24X² CD-R/RW/8X² DVD Combo Drive (DVD+R/RW Opt.)**
- **Front Panel Audio DJ with Supersis Power Switch**
- 3.5" Removable 1.44MB FDD Exchangeable with Optional 2nd Battery/CD-R/RW/DVD/HDD Drive
- 802.11b/g/Wi-Fi Wireless (Optional)
- Bluetooth (Optional)
- 56K V.90 Modem³ and 10/100/1000 Ethernet
- 3D Surround Sound ISPDIF 5.1CH output for DVDI
- 3 Hot-Keys for E-Mail, Browser and DVD Player
- Built-In Touchpad Pointing Device with Scrolling Keys
- 1 Type II PCMCIA Slot
- Infrared, Wireless Fast IR Interface
- 1 IEEE 1394 Port (Mini) and 1 TV-Out Port
- 4 USB 2.0 Ports
- Other Ports: 1P, Ext. Keyboard, Ext. CRT
- High-Performance Lithium-Ion Battery
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- Carrying Case and AC Adapter
- 13"w x 11.4"d x 1.7"h

$1945

For the Latest in Extreme Gaming Systems:

PROSTARGAMING.COM

Call us at:

800.243.6650

ProStar Computers, Inc.
1129 Conver Court, City of Industry, CA 91748
Phone: 626.854.3428 **Fax:** 626.854.3438 **Tech Support:** 888.576.4742
Hours: Mon-Fri, 7:30am-6:00pm Sat, 9:00am-3:00pm, PST
GSA Contract #: GS-35F-0094H
American Express, Discover, VISA and MasterCard Credit Cards Accepted – No Surcharge

PROSTAR
SUPERIOR TECHNOLOGY SINCE 1993

¹1X/2X Minimum ²10X Minimum ³Download speeds limited to 53Kbps. Upload speeds are less. Actual data speeds will vary depending on line conditions ⁴Total HD accessible capacity may vary depending on operating environment. ©2004 by ProStar Computers, Inc. All rights reserved. Intel, Intel Pentium and Intel Centrino are trademarks or registered trademarks of Intel Corporation or its subsidiaries in the United States and other countries. All other companies and product names are trademarks of their respective companies. Dealer price is not subject to 30 days money back guarantee program. Opened software and shipping charges are non-refundable. 30-day money back guarantee does not include return freight or shipping and handling charge. Not responsible for photo or typographical errors. Price and terms subject to change without notice. Depending on the options you choose, your notebook may or may not resemble systems shown above.

10 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT RUNNING *DOOM 3* ON YOUR PC

Questions answered by Robert Duffy, lead programmer, id Software

The *Doom 3* engine makes blasting demons a gloriously easy affair.

(1) Please share your thoughts on the latest generation of graphics technology — NV40 (GeForce 6800) vs. R420 (RADEON X800) — as it relates to *Doom 3*. For your purposes, is one technology better than the other?

Both cards do an excellent job running Doom 3. Right now, the NV40 edges out the R420 in overall speed, but they are both quite capable of running Doom 3 *in High Quality with very good framerates.*

(2) How many unique render paths does *Doom 3* have? In what ways will the game look and/or perform differently with each of them, and which video cards run each path best?

Four rendering paths are supported: NV10, NV20, R200, and ARB2. There's also an ARB path, but it doesn't support full functionality.

All of the rendering paths support the same basic functionality, which means that the game looks effectively the same on each card. The ARB2 path does support fragment programs, which we use for a very cool heat-shimmer effect (and some other effects), although these effects-passes are not critical to the overall look of the game.

The NV10 path is used for GeForce4 MX cards. The visual quality on this card is good, although in some cases we have to downsize certain classes of textures to get texture-memory usage down. This path is a five-pass path to see the game as it was intended. We also see some precision issues in some cases, although this typically just produces a few artifacts and is not very noticeable.

The NV20 path is used for GeForce3 and GeForce4 cards. The quality level on this path is very good and we are down to two passes overall (three passes when a light texture is not monochrome) for full functionality.

The R200 path is used for ATI 8500 and ATI 9000 GPUs. The R200 path is single-pass overall for full functionality, and the quality level using this path is the same as the NV20. It doesn't suffer from the overbright precision issue of the NV20.

The ARB2 path is considered the "total package" path. Modern cards such as NVIDIA FX GPUs and ATI R300+ GPUs fully support this path. We get everything done in one pass, and with the additional support of vertex and fragment programs, a few of the special effects look more impressive.

One of the things we opted to do is make sure the game looks good on all supported paths versus sacrificing a lot of visual quality just to run on older, slower cards.

***PC Gamer's take:** So long as you have at least a GeForce4 MX card (and remember, a GeForce4 MX is LESS powerful than a GeForce3), you should be able to play* Doom 3 *with many of its bells and whistles at a decent clip.*

(3) Assuming that the only difference between the two systems is their graphics interfaces, will a PCI Express-based PC run *Doom 3* faster than an AGP-based system?

PCI Express should make no notable difference.

(4) Does *Doom 3* run better on video cards with 256MB of video memory rather than 128MB? If so, is the difference a big one? What can a person with 128MB of video memory do to improve performance? What sorts of details should they turn down first?

The more video memory, the better. On 64MB video cards, we have to downsize certain classes of textures to get them to fit. On 128MB video cards, we run everything at full resolution but use compressed textures. On 256MB video cards, we run with compressed diffuse and specular textures and uncompressed normal maps. In Ultra Quality, everything is uncompressed but most levels require about 500MB of texture memory, so we don't enable this setup by default on any currently shipping video card.

Doom 3 *automatically chooses the best options to use and run well, and someone with a 128MB (or even a 64MB) video card will get great visuals and good performance right out of the box.*

Frightened? Don't be! *Doom 3* looks sensational even with a GeForce4 MX card.

***PC Gamer*'s take:** *They've made the thing idiot-proof. Sweet!*

(5) Given a 32-bit Windows environment, how much RAM should a gamer have in his PC if he wants to see *Doom 3* running at its best? Should that same gamer go for more RAM if he switches to 64-bit Windows?
512MB RAM is ideal, and if you're trying to run the game in Ultra Quality, you'll want 1GB RAM or more. We don't do anything specifically for a 64-bit OS.

(6) So, regardless of which OS he's using, what's the least amount of system RAM a fella should have if he wants to have a good *Doom 3* experience?
384MB RAM, although 512MB RAM is highly recommended.

(7) Same question, but regarding one's CPU: What's the least amount of CPU horsepower a person should have if he wants to have a good *Doom 3* experience?
A 1.5GHz P4 or the AMD equivalent (e.g., an Athlon 1500+).

***PC Gamer*'s take:** Doom 3 *relies much more heavily on your video card than on your CPU. But because most other modern games require considerably more CPU horsepower, it's wise to go higher than this minimum spec if you can afford to.*

(8) Is it true that *Doom 3*'s audio engine is entirely CPU-dependent, thus negating the benefits of high-end sound cards? If so, what are the benefits? What are the drawbacks?
Yes, we do all sound-mixing in the Doom 3 engine and don't rely on high-end audio hardware to help out with this aspect. Moving it over to the audio card would have a negligible benefit, as our current sound-mixing takes up only a few percent of the CPU.

The benefit is that we run the same code-path on all systems. The only drawback is that we run the sound engine in a separate thread, and keeping up with sound-synchronization issues has at times been a bit of a headache.

***PC Gamer*'s take:** *Much to Creative Labs' chagrin, Doom 3 should sound exactly the same (and perform equally well) on your motherboard's built-in audio processor as it will on a high-end Audigy 2 ZS sound card.*

(9) If you want *Doom 3* to look as good as possible on your PC, but also want to boost framerates a bit, which options should you decrease in quality first?
The only thing that comes to mind is to disable the advanced special effects, which turns off fragment program support. Apart from that, there's just not much to disable that doesn't affect the overall look of the game.

***PC Gamer*'s take:** *If Doom 3 runs slowly on your system, and you'd like it to run faster while maintaining all of its Doomy-ness and gloominess, you may have to bite the bullet and upgrade.*

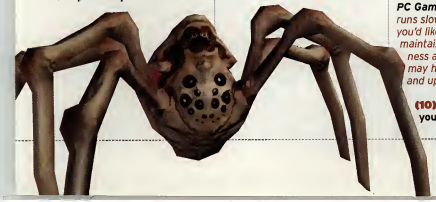
(10) Tying it all together, if you were to build three *Doom* 3-lovin' PCs, one at each of the following levels, which components would you want to see in a:

LOW-END SYSTEM
CPU: 1.5GHz P4 or AMD equivalent
RAM: 512MB
Video Card: NVIDIA GeForce Ti 4800 or ATI RADEON 9500

MID-RANGE SYSTEM
CPU: 2.4GHz P4 or AMD equivalent
RAM: 1GB
Video Card: NVIDIA GeForce 5950 or ATI RADEON 9800 Pro/XT

HIGH-RANGE SYSTEM
Robert didn't offer any current-generation high-end suggestions. Instead, he told us, "Doom 3 has settings that will make the game look even better on hardware that doesn't exist yet (beyond just upping the resolution, like in most games)." That sounds really cool, and we can't wait to see how the game looks on the hardware of tomorrow. But in case you're wondering what to buy today, here's what we say:

***PC Gamer*'s High-End Recommendation**
CPU: 3.4GHz P4 or AMD equivalent
RAM: 2GB
Video Card: NVIDIA GeForce 6800 Ultra or ATI RADEON X800 XT



ZILLION FX

- **AMD® Athlon™ 64 Processor with HyperTransport™ Technology The ONLY Windows-compatible 64-bit PC processor up to 1600Mhz system bus**
- Raidmax® Samurai Gaming Case
- 512MB **DDR400** Memory
- ***Serial-ATA*** 160GB 7200RPM Hard Drive w/ 8MB Cache
- 16x DVD-ROM Drive
- **12X DVD±R/±RW** Drive & 1.44MB Floppy Drive
- Creative Labs 56K V.92 Fax Modem
- **eVGA NVIDIA® GeForce™ 6600 Ultra 256M6 DDR AGP 6X** Video Card
- 5.1 Channel Surround 3D Premium Sound
- **10/100/1000 M6ps Ethernet LAN**
- Creative Combridge Desk Top Theater 5.1 S560 Surround Sound Speakers
- 19" ViewSonic® Perfect Flat E90F+SB .21H mm Monitor
- Microsoft® Opelto1 5-Button IntelliMouse Explorer
- Multimedia Keyboard
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- Free Norton AntiVirus™ 2004 CD
- Free 1-Year 24/7 ***I-Care*** Deluxe Technical Support + On-Site Service

$ 1729

AMD Athlon™ 64 FX-53 Processor	$ 2509
AMD Athlon™ 64 3800+ Processor	$ 2299
AMD Athlon™ 64 3500+ Processor	$ 1959
AMD Athlon™ 64 3400+ Processor	$ 1859
AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor	$ 1789
AMD Athlon™ 64 3000+ Processor	$ 1739
AMD Athlon™ 64 2800+ Processor	$ 1729

AMD 64 Athlon

AMD 64 Athlon FX

The ONLY
Windows-compatible
64-bit PC processor

iBUYPOWER

- Provides leading-edge 32-bit performance for music, video, and games and is ready for future 64-bit software.
- Improves security against certain types of viruses, with Enhanced Virus Protection for the upcoming Microsoft® Windows® XP SP2.
- Conserves power and operates quietly with AMD Cool'n'Quiet™ technology.

WWW.iBUYPOWER.COM

GAMER FX

- **AMD® Athlon™ 64 Processor with HyperTransport™ Technology The ONLY Windows-compatible 64-bit PC processor up to 1600Mhz system bus**
- Coltyech® Gaming Case
- 512MB **DDR400** Memory
- 160GB 7200RPM Hard Drive
- 16x DVD-ROM; 52x32x52 CD-RW
- Creative Labs 56K V.92 Fax Modem
- **NVIDIA® GeForce™ 6600 128M6 DDR AGP 8X** Video Card
- 5.1 Channel Surround 3D Premium Sound
- **10/100/1000 M6ps Ethernet LAN**
- 600Watt Surround Sound Speakers
- Multimedia Keyboard & Optical Mouse
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- Free 1-Year 24/7 ***I-Care*** Deluxe Technical Support + On-Site Service

$ 1059

AMD Athlon™ 64 FX-53 Processor	$ 1839
AMD Athlon™ 64 3800+ Processor	$ 1639
AMD Athlon™ 64 3500+ Processor	$ 1289
AMD Athlon™ 64 3400+ Processor	$ 1189
AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor	$ 1119
AMD Athlon™ 64 3000+ Processor	$ 1069
AMD Athlon™ 64 2800+ Processor	$ 1059

NIGHT DREAMER FX

- **AMD® Athlon™ 64 Processor with HyperTransport™ Technology The ONLY Windows-compatible 64-bit PC processor up to 1600Mhz system bus**
- Raidmax® Aluminum 8-Boy Super Light Weight Tower Case with 420 Watt Power + See-Through Window + Sound-Activated Neon Light
- 1024MB **DDR400** Memory
- 160GB 7200RPM Hard Drive
- **12X DVD±R/±RW Drive;** 16x DVD-ROM Drive
- Creative Labs 56K V.92 Fax Modem
- **ATI® RADEON™ X800 Pro 256M6 DDR AGP 6X** Video Card
- 5.1 Channel Surround 3D Premium Sound
- **10/100/1000 M6ps Ethernet LAN**
- Logitech Z-640 5.1 Surround Sound Speakers
- 19" ViewSonic® Perfect Flat E90FB .21H mm Monitor
- Microsoft® Opelto1 5-Button IntelliMouse Explorer; Multimedia Keyboard
- Microsoft Windows® XP Home Edition & Free Norton AntiVirus™ 2004 CD
- Free 1-Year 24/7 ***I-Care*** Deluxe Technical Support + On-Site Service

$ 1659

AMD Athlon™ 64 FX-53 Processor	$ 2449
AMD Athlon™ 64 3800+ Processor	$ 2239
AMD Athlon™ 64 3500+ Processor	$ 1899
AMD Athlon™ 64 3400+ Processor	$ 1789
AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor	$ 1719
AMD Athlon™ 64 3000+ Processor	$ 1679
AMD Athlon™ 64 2800+ Processor	$ 1659

AMD®, the AMD® Arrow logo, AMD® Athlon™, and combinations thereof are trademarks of Advanced Micro Devices, Inc All prices effective as of Aug. 15, 2004.

BARGAIN 64

- AMD® Athlon™ 64 Processor with HyperTransport™ Technology The ONLY Windows-compatible 64-bit PC processor up to 1600Mhz system bus
- Roidmax® A26B Mid-Tower Case with 420 Watt Power
- 512MB DDR400 Memory
- 80GB 7200RPM Hard Drive
- 16x DVD-ROM
- Creative Labs 56K V.92 Fax Modem
- ATI® RADEON™ 9200 128MB DDR AGP 8X Video Card
- 5.1 Channel Surround 3D Premium Sound
- 10/100 MBps Ethernet LAN
- 600Watt Surround Sound Speakers
- Microsoft® Mouse & Keyboard
- Free 1-Year 24/7 *I-Care* Deluxe Technical Support + On-Site Service

$ 599

AMD Athlon™ 64 3400+ Processor	$ 729
AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor	$ 659
AMD Athlon™ 64 3000+ Processor	$ 619
AMD Athlon™ 64 2800+ Processor	$ 599

BATTALION-101 S-TURBO

- 15.4" Wide Screen1:8:10 WXGA TFT LCD 1280x800 Display
- AMD® Mobile Athlon™ 64 Processor with HyperTransport Technology
- Mobile ATI® Radeon™ 9700 PRO 128MB DDR Video
- 512MB PC-2700 DDR Memory
- Removable 8x DVD & 24x16x24 CD-RW Combo Drive
- 60GB 5400RPM Ultra-ATA100 Hard Drive
- 10/100Mb Ethernet LAN & 56K Modem
- Wireless 802.11g 54Mbps Mini-PCI Network
- 3x USB 2.0 & 1x Firewire IEEE-1394 Ports
- 3-in-1 Build-in Media Card Reader
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- Free 1-Year *I-Care* Deluxe 24/7 Phone Support
- Choice of 8 Exclusive Reflective Colors
- High Performance Li-Ion Battery
- Free Deluxe Carrying Case

$ 1489

Mobile AMD Athlon™ 64 3400+ Processor	$ 1609
Mobile AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor	$ 1549
Mobile AMD Athlon™ 64 3000+ Processor	$ 1499
Mobile AMD Athlon™ 64 2800+ Processor	$ 1489

Picture Shown with Optional Sicuro RW-670XL 5.1 Gaming Speaker System

64 BEST BUY

- AMD® Athlon™ 64 Processor with HyperTransport™ Technology The ONLY Windows-compatible 64-bit PC processor up to 1600Mhz system bus
- NZXT® Guardian MOD Tower Case with 420 Watt Power + See-Through Window + Sound-Activated Neon Light
- 512MB DDR400 Memory
- 80GB 7200RPM Hard Drive
- 16x DVD-ROM & 52x32x52 CD-RW Combo Drive
- Creative Labs 56K V.92 Fax Modem
- NVIDIA® GeForce™ FX 5200 128MB DDR AGP 8X Video Card
- 5.1 Channel Surround 3D Premium Sound
- 10/100 MBps Ethernet LAN
- 600Watt Surround Sound Speakers
- Opcitol Mouse & Multimedia Keyboard
- Microsoft Windows® XP Home Edition
- Free 1-Year 24/7 *I-Care* Deluxe Technical Support + On-Site Service

$ 749

AMD Athlon™ 64 3800+ Processor	$ 1319
AMD Athlon™ 64 3500+ Processor	$ 979
AMD Athlon™ 64 3400+ Processor	$ 879
AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor	$ 809
AMD Athlon™ 64 3000+ Processor	$ 759
AMD Athlon™ 64 2800+ Processor	$ 749

BACK TO SCHOOL 64

- AMD® Athlon™ 64 Processor with HyperTransport™ Technology The ONLY Windows-compatible 64-bit PC processor up to 1600Mhz system bus
- NZXT® Guardian MOD Tower Case with 420 Watt Power + See-Through Window + Sound-Activated Neon Light
- 512MB DDR400 Memory
- 80GB 7200RPM Hard Drive
- 12X DVD±R/±RW + CD-RW Drive
- Creative Labs 56K V.92 Fax Modem
- ATI® RADEON™ 9600-XT 256MB DDR AGP 8X Video Card
- 5.1 Channel Surround 3D Premium Sound
- 10/100 MBps Ethernet LAN
- 600Watt Surround Sound Speakers
- Opcitol Mouse & Multimedia Keyboard
- Microsoft Windows® XP Home Edition
- Free 1-Year 24/7 *I-Care* Deluxe Technical Support + On-Site Service

$ 899

AMD Athlon™ 64 3800+ Processor	$ 1479
AMD Athlon™ 64 3500+ Processor	$ 1139
AMD Athlon™ 64 3400+ Processor	$ 1039
AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor	$ 969
AMD Athlon™ 64 3000+ Processor	$ 919
AMD Athlon™ 64 2800+ Processor	$ 899

BACK TO SCHOOL SLIM

- 12.1" XGA TFT LCD 1024X768 Display
- **Intel® Centrino™ Mobile Technology**
  - **Intel® Celeron® M Processor at 1.4GHz, 512KB L2 Cache, 400MHz FSB**
  - **Wireless 802.11g 54MBps Mini-PCI Wireless Card**
- Intel® 855G Integrated 32MB Video
- 256MB PC-2700 DDR Memory
- 20GB Ultra-ATA100 Hard Drive
- Removable 8x DVD & 24x1Bx24 CD-RW Combo Drive
- 10/100Mb Ethernet LAN & 56K Modem
- 3x USB 2.0
- **Choice of 3 Exclusive Colors**
- **4-Hour Li-Ion Battery**

$ 999

Intel® Pentium® M Processor 755 (2.0GHz, 2MB L2 Cache, 400MHz FSB)	$ 1639
Intel® Pentium® M Processor 745 (1.8GHz, 2MB L2 Cache, 400MHz FSB)	$ 1389
Intel® Pentium® M Processor 735 (1.7GHz, 1MB L2 Cache, 400MHz FSB)	$ 1239
Intel® Pentium® M Processor 1.8GHz	$ 1179
Intel® Pentium® M Processor 1.5GHz	$ 1139

BATTALION-1 015G

- 17.0" Wide Screen WSXGA TFT LCD 1680X1050 Display
- **Intel® Pentium® 4 Prescot CPU with HT Technology 800MHz FSB; optional Pentium® 4 Extreme CPU with HT Technology 800MHz FSB**
- Wireless 802.11g 54MBps Mini-PCI Wireless Card
- **Mobile ATI® Radeon™ 9700 PRO 256MB DDR Video**
- 1024MB Duel Channel DDR-400 Memory
- 60GB 5400RPM Ultra-ATA100 Hard Drive
- Optional Hardware Raid-0 or Raid-1 w/2nd HDD
- Removable 8x DVD & 24x1Bx24 CD-RW Combo Drive
- 10/100/1000Mb Ethernet LAN & 56K Modem
- 3x USB 2.0 and 1x Firewire IEEE-1394 Ports
- **Build-in TV Tuner with Remote Control**
- **Build-in Digital Web Video Camera & 7-in-1 Media Card Reader**
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- Free 1-Year I-CareDeluxe 24/7 Phone Support

$ 2249

Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor with HT Technology 3.4GHz	$ 2379
Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor with HT Technology 3.2GHz	$ 2319
Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor with HT Technology 3.0GHz	$ 2269
Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor with HT Technology 2.8GHz	$ 2249

Get more done, have more fun.

You can quickly run multiple applications at once with a iBUYPOWER Dream 2004 based on the Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor with HT Technology.

iBUYPOWER

WWW.iBUYPOWER.COM

BATTALION-1 015E-Turbo

- 15.0" SXGA+ TFT LCD 1400X1050 Display
- **Intel® Centrino™ Mobile Technology**
  - **Intel® Pentium® M Processor at 1.5GHz, 1MB L2 Cache, 400MHz FSB**
  - **Wireless 802.11g 54MBps Mini-PCI Wireless Card**
- Advanced 400MHz FSB & 1024KB Advanced L2 Cache
- **Mobile ATI® Radeon™ 9700 PRO 128MB DDR Video**
- 256MB PC-2700 DDR Memory
- 40GB 5400RPM Ultra-ATA100 Hard Drive
- Removable 8x DVD & 24x1Bx24 CD-RW Combo Drive
- 10/100Mb Ethernet LAN & 56K Modem
- 3x USB 2.0 and 1x Firewire IEEE-1394 Ports
- **3-in-1 Build-in Media Card Reader**
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- Free 1-Year *I-Care* Deluxe 24/7 Phone Support
- **Choice of 6 Exclusive Reflective Colors**
- **5-Hour Li-Ion Battery**

$ 1399

Intel® Pentium® M Processor 755 (2.0GHz, 2MB L2 Cache, 400MHz FSB)	$ 1909
Intel® Pentium® M Processor 745 (1.8GHz, 2MB L2 Cache, 400MHz FSB)	$ 1669
Intel® Pentium® M Processor 735 (1.7GHz, 2MB L2 Cache, 400MHz FSB)	$ 1519

BATTALION-1 015S-Turbo

- 15.4" **Wide Screen16:10 WXGA TFT LCD 1280x800 Display**
- **Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor with HT Technology Advanced 800MHz FSB**
- **Mobile ATI® Radeon™ 9700 PRO 128MB DDR Video**
- 512MB PC-2700 DDR Memory
- Removable 8x DVD & 24x16x24 CD-RW Combo Drive
- 60GB 5400RPM Ultra-ATA100 Hard Drive
- 10/100Mb Ethernet LAN & 56K Modem
- **Wireless 802.11g 54MBps Mini-PCI Network**
- 3x USB 2.0 & 1x Firewire IEEE-1394 Ports
- **3-in-1 Build-in Media Card Reader**
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- Free 1-Year *I-Care* Deluxe 24/7 Phone Support
- **Choice of 8 Exclusive Reflective Colors**
- High Performance Li-Ion Battery & Free Deluxe Carrying Case

$ 1499

Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor with HT Technology 3.4GHz	$ 1619
Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor with HT Technology 3.2GHz	$ 1559
Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor with HT Technology 3.0GHz	$ 1519
Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor with HT Technology 2.8GHz	$ 1499

TOLL FREE 888. 462.3899

INTEL®, the INTEL® inside logo and Pentium® are all registered trademarks and Celeron™ is a trademark of INTEL® Corporation in the United State and other Countries.

NVIDIA
GeForce 6800 Ultra

REMEMBER TO BLINK!

The NVIDIA GeForce 6800 GPUs deliver graphics to drench your senses.

iBUYPOWER

GAMER EX

- Raidmax® Samurai Gaming Case
- Intel® i915 Chipset Motherboard with 16X PCI-Express, USB 2.0, IEEE-1394
- 512MB Dual Channel DDR400 Memory
- 80GB 7200RPM Ultra ATA100 Hard Drive
- 128MB PCI-Express 16X NVIDIA® GeForce™ 5750 DDR Video
- 16X DVD-ROM Drive, 52x32x52 CD-RW Drive
- Creative Lab V.92 Fax Modem
- 5.1 Channel Surround Sound, 500Watt Surround Sound Speakers
- 10/100/1000 MBps Network LAN
- 19" Viewsonic® E90 .23mmH Monitor
- Multimedia Internet Keyboard & Optical Mouse
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition & Free Norton Anti Virus 2004

$ 1179

Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor with HT Technology

550 (3.4 Ghz, 1MB L2 Cache, 800 Mhz FSB)	$ 1459
540 (3.2 Ghz, 1MB L2 Cache, 800 Mhz FSB)	$ 1289
530 (3.0 Ghz, 1MB L2 Cache, 800 Mhz FSB)	$ 1219
520 (2.8 Ghz, 1MB L2 Cache, 800 Mhz FSB)	$ 1179

NSIST ON NVIDIA

GAMER PRO XP

- NVIDIA® nForce™2 Ultra 400 AGP 8X Motherboard with USB 2.0
- NZXT® Guardian MOD Tower Case with 420 Watt Power + See-Through Window + Sound-Activated Neon Light
- 512MB Dual Channel DDR400 Memory
- 160GB 7200RPM Hard Drive
- 16x DVD-ROM Drive, 52x32x52 CD-RW Drive
- NVIDIA GeForce™ 6800 Ultra 256MB DDR AGP 8X Graphics Card
- NVIDIA SoundStorm™ Audio with Dolby Digital® 5.1 Encoding
- NVIDIA 10/100 Ethernet LAN
- Logitech Z-640 5.1 Surround Sound Speakers
- 19" ViewSonic® Perfect Flat E90FB .21H mm Monitor
- Optical Mouse; MultiMedia Keyboard
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition & Free Norton AntiVirus™ 2004 CD
- Free 1-Year 24/7 *I-Care* Deluxe Technical Support + On-Site Service

$ 1389

AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 3200+	$ 1519
AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 3000+	$ 1469
AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 2800+	$ 1439
AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 2700+	$ 1429
AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 2500+	$ 1399
AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 2400+	$ 1389

Picture Shown with Optional Sicuto RW-870XL 5.1 Gaming Speaker System

BACK TO SHCOOL

- Raidmax® Scorpio-868 Mid-Tower Case with 350 Watt Power + See-Through Window + Sound-Activated Neon Light
- Intel® 865 Chip 800MHz FSB 8X AGP DDR400 HT Ready Main Board
- 512MB Dual Channel DDR400 Memory
- 80GB 7200RPM Hard Drive
- 16x DVD-ROM + 52x32x52 CD-RW Combo Drive
- NVIDIA GeForce™ FX 5200 128MB DDR AGP 8X Graphics Card
- 5.1 Channel Surround Sound; 600Watt Surround Sound Speakers
- 10/100 MBps Ethernet LAN
- Scrolling Internet Mouse & Keyboard
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- Free 1-Year 24/7 *I-Care* Deluxe Technical Support + On-Site Service

$ 969

Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor with HT Technology

3.4 Ghz 800MHz FSB	$ 1149
3.2 Ghz 800MHz FSB	$ 999
3.0 Ghz 800MHz FSB	$ 899
2.8 Ghz 800MHz FSB	$ 869

WWW.iBUYPOWER.COM **TOLL FREE 888.462.3899**

Price, specifications and terms are subject to change without notice. Picture may differ from actual products. iBUYPOWER is not responsible for errors in typography and/or photography. 30-day money back guarantee does not include shipping charges, special order merchandise. All prices effective as of Aug. 15, 2004.

All rights reserved. All company and product names may be trademarks or registered trademarks of The respective owners with which they are associated. Features, pricing, availability, and specifications are subject to change without notice. Nalu mermaid image ©2004 NVIDIA Corporation and is used under license to iBUYPOWER from NVIDIA Corporation. NVIDIA, NVIDIA eye logo, NSIST, GeForce, The way it's meant to be played logo, NVIDIA nFORCE, and NVIDIA SoundStorm are registered trademarks and/or trademarks of NVIDIA Corporation in the United States and other countries and are used under license to iBUYPOWER from NVIDIA Corporation.

DREAM

DHD Media Center

PC GAMER EDITOR'S CHOICE

You're simply not a nerd if you don't want one of these

Cool stuff *inside* other cool stuff is always *extra* super-cool. For example, Cap'n Crunch cereal is cool, but Cap'n Crunch cereal with a secret decoder ring inside every box is *extra* super-cool. Alienware's new DHD Media Center is like that, only what's inside of it is far more awesome than a stupid decoder ring.

What we've got here is a high-end, Windows Media Center-based gaming PC packed inside a 30-inch, high-definition LCD TV. Holy crap, right? Yes, few things in this universe are cooler than a TV stuffed with a sweet gaming rig.

Inside this impressive chassis sits a DVD-ROM burner, a desktop motherboard, a 3.4GHz P4 (Northwood), 2GB RAM, and a full-fledged 9800 XT card. As a result, overall game performance is stellar. In our tests, we were able to play current titles like *Halo* and *Splinter Cell* with nary a stutter, since framerates were comparable to those on similarly configured desktop rigs.

Speed is terrific — and at this price, demanded — but what really sets this computer apart from the crowd is its super-bright and vibrant 30-inch LCD screen. All of the hard work Alienware has done to ensure the proper mating of these somewhat disparate components has paid off: I'm tellin' ya, you haven't played *Far Cry* 'til you've played it on a DHD Media Center PC. With the system only a couple feet in front of you, the experience is not unlike playing on a full-size movie-theater screen. The game is *everywhere* in your field of vision, immersing you in a way you've never experienced before.

ALIENWARE
DHD Media Center
$7,500–$8,000
www.alienware.com

SIMULATED IMAGE

SYSTEM SPECS

CPU P4 3.4GHz **MOTHERBOARD** Intel D865PERKL **MEMORY** 2GB PC-3200 **HARD DRIVE(S)** 250GB, 7,500rpm **SOUND CARD** Onboard audio **VIDEO CARD** RADEON 9800XT **WARRANTY** 1-year parts/labor/shipping

LCDs, regardless of their size, always have a native resolution at which they're designed to function best. The DHD's is 1280x768, which means that you can't run games at resolutions higher than that. And in many cases, since 1280x768 is a somewhat odd resolution (due to the fact that the screen has a 16:9 aspect ratio rather than a PC monitor's 4:3), you'll have to play at 1024x768. That's not so bad, though, because at this resolution you can add antialiasing to almost any game, smoothing out jaggies wherever they rear their pointy heads. Plus, for some odd reason, 1024x768 on this screen looks more high-res than on a standard monitor.

As I mentioned earlier, the DHD comes standard with Windows Media Center (basically just Windows XP with a few extra features, including a multimedia-focused menu system), so you can use this PC for more than just games. Its super-bright, high-contrast display produces exceptionally sharp text, which makes web surfing a real joy. Watch DVDs, pause and record live TV (MDTV support coming soon — it should cost about $200 extra as either an upgrade for this model or an add-on to a new one), and then burn your favorite shows onto DVD. Or share family photos and home movies with the touch of a button or three. If you don't like the Media Center interface, close it down and you'll have access to a more typical Win XP desktop, replete with all the functionality you'd expect.

If you've got $8,000 to spend on this kind of PC, then screw you, Richie Rich. More importantly, be advised of a couple of things: LCD TVs don't display analog-TV signals as well as standard non-HD picture tubes. That said, expect DVDs to look terrific, and HDTV signals to look even better. Also, while LCDs are very bright — much more so than Plasma — they do have issues with shadows being displayed too dark.

At press time, Alienware is still trying to decide just how customizable the final DHD will be. Make sure to call them and ask which options are available, and if possible, opt for a RADEON X800 card over the 9800 XT.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS	Huge, amazing-looking screen; fully-functional high-end PC inside a high-res TV; includes wall-mounting kit.
LOWS	Same price as a cheap car; analog-TV image not as good as tube.
BOTTOM LINE	With a DHD, the World of Tomorrow can be yours today, nerd.

90% EDITORS' CHOICE

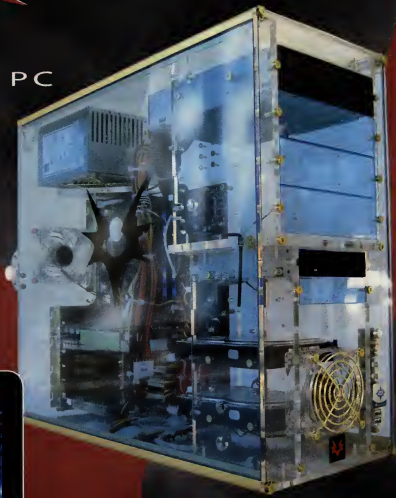
BENCHMARKS	3DMark03[1]	AquaMark3[2]	Quake III[3]	Unreal Tournament 2003[4]	Splinter Cell[5]	Halo[6]	Far Cry[6]
DHD Media Center	3DMarks: 6,216 CPU: 702	Score: 46,942 GFX: 6,141 CPU: 9,959	1024x768: 319, 243 (fps)	1024x768: 236, 84 (fps)	1024x768: 46 fps	1024x768: 53 fps	1024x768: 57 fps

1 Tests run at 1024x768 with trilinear filtering, no AA, anisotropy set to "1" 2 Default test run at 1024x768 3 All settings maxed; no AA, then 4x AA and 8x AF 4 "Flyby" results, followed by "Botmatch" 5 All settings maxed 6 Very High settings, water set to Ultra High

THE ULTIMATE GAMING MACHINE

Leading-edge Performance Today, With Readiness For The Future.

VICIOUS PC



AMD 64 Athlon

The ONLY Microsoft ® Windows ® compatible 64-bit PC Processor

Assassin

Price: $2699

AMD Athlon™ 64 3800+ Processor With Hyper Transport™ Technology
NVIDIA GeForce 6800 Ultra 256MB DDR
1024MB Dual-Channel PC3200 400MHz DDR RAM Memory
Dual 120GB SATA 150 7200 RPM RAID Array Hard Drive
16x52x24x52 DVD+CD-RW Drive
ViewSonic 19" PerfectFlat G90FB .21mm dp Monitor
Altec Lansing 251 5.1 6-Channel Speakers w/Subwoofer
500W Translucent Case and Voice-Actvated Lighting
Lifetime Technical Support
Multimedia Office Keyboard and Optical Mouse
Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition w/ Full CD
Conserves power and operates quietly with AMD Cool'n' Quiet™ technology

ULTIMATE GAME MACHINE — Computer Gaming World

c|net Editors' Choice

MAXIMUM PC KICK ASS PRODUCT

www.viciouspc.com

Order Toll Free 1.866.289.2872

MSI

© 2004 Viciouspc.com, All rights reserved. All brands and product names are trademarks or registered trademarks of their respective companies. All prices and configurations are subject to change without notice or obligation. Original shipping charges and opened software are non-refundable. All returns have to be accompanied by an RMA number and must be in re-salable condition. Systems pictures may include some equipment and/or accessories which are not standard features. Vicious PC is not responsible for any typographical errors. This model number indicates relative software performance among AMD processors.

EXTRAV, MID, DREAM

Nokia N-Gage QD

Now, THAT's what we're talkin' about!

The original N-Gage probably had the worst rollout of any new game machine since the Virtual Boy. There's no way to sugarcoat it — as both a portable gaming device *and* a cell phone, it blew with a typhoon-force gale. So what a pleasure it is to see that Nokia has gotten its act together, overhauling last year's flawed design and releasing the N-Gage QD (which I assume means "Quite Different" from its predecessor).

The QD's biggest improvement over the old model is that game cards can be hot-swapped via a port at the bottom of the unit, eliminating the need to turn off the device and then remove both the back cover and the battery before switching games. Plus, you don't have to hold the unit sideways against your ear while making cell calls anymore: the QD is held against your cheek, screen-side inward, more like a traditional phone. (A screen cover would've been handy for those of us with oily skin.)

NOKIA
N-Gage QD
$99 with service contract, $199 without
www.n-gage.com

growing, including AAA ports like *Ghost Recon* and *The Sims: Bustin' Out*. The unit can also render some impressive visuals for a handheld, displaying lag-free 3D graphics that would make a Game Boy choke.

My main complaint is that the QD's thin portrait display doesn't suit some games — especially GBA ports like *Crash Nitro Kart*, a racer that plays best with a nice fat screen.

The QD, like the original, has built-in Bluetooth wireless support: It allows you to connect to any Bluetooth-enabled PC or play multiplayer games with other N-Gage owners. Another cool feature is N-Gage Arena, a free online service that links to the N-Gage community through your cell connection, letting you download new game content, exchange screenshots, compete in online tournaments, and chat with other gamers.

So if you don't mind a cell phone bulkier than everyone else's anorexic mini-models — and can withstand the cockeyed stare of flight attendants as you attempt to play games on a plane — Nokia's gaming combo is QD (Quite Delicious).

***Tiger Woods, Ghost Recon, Call of Duty, Elder Scrolls* — the selection of QD games is already pretty sweet.**

Under the hood, a few features have been dropped to reduce the unit's size and cost. The digital music player and FM radio are gone; the trade-off is slightly smaller casing (4.65 inches by 2.68 inches by .87 inches) that's comfortably shaped for playing games. The tech is still based on the Nokia Series 60 platform and uses the Symbian OS, which is compatible with Java 2–based games and applications.

As just a cell phone, the QD is comparable to similarly priced models. The sound quality is good, and the unit comes with XHTML browser support, a 4,096-color backlit display, downloadable ring tones, dual-band operation, up to five hours of talk time, and a few personal-management applications.

And once you get used to the numberpad buttons, the QD is a decent portable game machine. The library of available titles is constantly

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT 85%

ROBOSAPIEN

Who doesn't need a robot buddy?

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

When I was 10 years old, I'd have eaten an entire load of elephant poop if it meant I could have my own robot buddy. So important were robots to me back then that I often dreamt I was one. Unfortunately, when I was 10, the closest I could get to owning my own robot friend was Nintendo's R.O.B. accessory for the original NES, and that made for pretty lame wish-fulfillment.

Well, get ready to live out the dream, because Robosapien has arrived. If you like robots like I do, you *need* to get one. Standing about a foot tall, Robo looks like a pretty typical toy until you power him up — three AAA batteries for his wireless remote, four D-sized batteries for him — and he starts to move around like a high-tech cyborg right out of a movie!

Once you get the hang of Robo's remote (it takes a few minutes), you'll see that he's capable of some pretty amazing things, such as walking, turning, picking up and throwing small, light objects with either hand, dancing, kung fu — and he can be programmed to do all of these things either on the fly or in long, complex chains.

For $99, Robosapien is a no-brainer for robot freaks and/or regular ol' tech nerds. I plan on marrying mine.

WowWee
Robosapien
$99
(M.S.R.P.)
www.robosapienonline.com

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT 90%

AVIATOR GX7™

TAKE FLIGHT & BREAK THE BARRIERS OF MOBILE COMPUTING™

- Intel® 3.60GHz Pentium® 4 Processor 560
- Intel® 865 Chipset
- Reflexion Series Metallic Automotive Finish
- 1024MB PC3200 Low Latency DDR RAM
- ATI Radeon Mobility 9700 256MB DVI Out
- 2 x 60GB 7200rpm HDD w/ 8MB Cache
- 4X DVD±RW / CD-RW Drive
- 17" WSXGA+ Super Clear LCD (1680x1050)
- 802.11g Turbo 108MBit / Gigabit Ethernet
- Built-in Subwoofer or TV-Tuner w/ Remote
- Built-in 6-in-1 Flash Media Card Reader
- Microsoft® Windows XP Professional Edition
- System Binder w/ Performance Benchmakrs
- Custom Disaster Recovery DVD
- 1-Year Platinum Warranty 24/7 Support

$3999 Customize & Price on hypersonic-pc.com

FURY GX™

STEP INTO THE NEXT DIMMENSION™

- Intel® 3.60GHz Pentium® 4 Processor 560
- Intel® 915 Express Chipset
- 1024MB 533MHz DDR-2 RAM
- ATI Radeon XB00 Pro 256MB DVI Out
- 120GB 7200rpm HDD w/ 8MB Cache
- 16X52X24X52X CD-RW / DVD Combo Drive
- Gigabit Ethernet Controller
- Microsoft® Windows XP Home Edition
- Brushed Aluminum Alloy Case
- Enermax 350W Power Supply
- System Binder w/ Performance Benchmakrs
- Custom Disaster Recovery DVD
- 1-Year Platinum Warranty 24/7 Support Onsite

$1699 Customize & Price on hypersonic-pc.com

SONIC BOOM™

THE EVOLUTION OF A REVOLUTION™

- Intel® 3.60GHz Pentium® 4 Processor 560
- Intel® 925X Express Chipset
- Reflexion Series Metallic Automotive Finish
- Silencer Package for Reduced Fan Noise
- 1024MB 533MHz DDR-2 RAM
- ATI Radeon XB00 Pro 256MB DVI Out
- 2 x 250GB 7200rpm HDD w/ 8MB Cache
- Plextor 12X DVD±RW / CD-RW Drive
- Creative Labs Audigy ZS
- 7-in-1 Floppy & Media Reader / Gigabit Ethernet
- Brushed All-Aluminum Case / 431W Enermax
- Microsoft® Windows XP Professional Edition
- System Binder w/ Performance Benchmakrs
- Custom Disaster Recovery DVD
- 1-Year Platinum Warranty 24/7 Support Onsite

$2999 Customize & Price on hypersonic-pc.com

Game on... and on, and on, and on.

The Sonic Boom features the power and performance of the **Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor 560** with HT Technology to put you in control of the most demanding games of today and tomorrow.

1.800.520.0498 | http://www.hypersonic-pc.com

Intel, Intel logo, Intel Inside logo, Intel Centrino, Intel Centrino logo, Celeron, Intel Xeon, Intel SpeedStep, Itanium, Pentium, and Pentium III Xeon are trademakrs or registered trademarks of Intel Corporation or its subsidiaries in the United States and in other countries.

HYPERSONIC

Q&A

What kind of RAM is best for games: SD, DDR, or Rambus? Is having dual-channel memory important?

— LEVI MAININI

A couple of years ago, RAM options were plentiful, but current-generation AMD- and Intel-based motherboards really support only a few flavors of DDR (and in some cases, DDR2) memory. So things aren't nearly as complicated as they once were. First, pick the type of CPU you want. Then look for a good motherboard — we always include a few options on our Trinity page — and grab at least 512MB of whichever type of memory it supports (typically 400MHz PC-3200 DDR). As for the second part of your question, Intel-based motherboards that are built to use dual-channel memory are often a few percentage points faster than their single-channel brethren, but there's very little difference in performance between the two types on AMD-based boards.

Yo, Vedel What should I look for in a new hard drive?

— JEFF MCNAMARA

From a gamer's perspective, the only thing a super-fast hard drive will net you is improved load times. That's right: a fast drive won't improve a game's framerate. For most people, a 7,200rpm drive with a 2MB (or larger) buffer and a seek time of 10ms or less should do the trick. If you happen to have a powerful PC and do a lot of photo or video manipulation (or run game servers), you may benefit from something faster like a 10,000rpm drive. As usual, brand-name drives such as Seagate, Maxtor, and Western Digital tend to be more reliable than those made by the little guys you've never heard of. Whichever drive you get, remember to defragment it at least once a month to get the best-possible performance.

How do I determine how big a power supply I need?

— PAUL LUTZ

The simple answer: Buy more wattage than you think you'll ever need. These days, that means you should probably grab a power supply that's around 400 watts for a typical high-end system, or as much as 480 watts if you're planning to throw one of NVIDIA's new power-hungry GeForce 6800 Ultra video cards into the mix.

The complicated answer: It's frickin' hard to know for sure what you really need. In a perfect world, the manuals that come with your hardware would all speak the same "language" when indicating how much power they draw, but in practice that's rarely the case. Instead, one component will list how many amps and volts it needs, while another will tell you how many watts. These discrepancies can quickly become confusing, which is why we err on the side of caution and recommend that you buy at least a 400-watt power supply.

Will gigabit Ethernet improve multiplayer game performance?

— SETH VALLEY

Nope. Standard 10/100 Ethernet is more than speedy enough to handle any multiplayer game. Move to gigabit only if you're looking to see zippier file-transfer times between machines on your network.

I recently built a new computer (Athlon 64 3400+, RADEON 9800 XT, 1GB RAM) with a little help from your magazine, but after setting up everything, I found that I was getting lower-than-expected benchmark scores in AquaMark3. While I had anticipated getting around 40,000 AquaMarks, I instead got — and continue to get — around 23,000. Is 40,000 too high for my system? Is 23,000 too low? I've tried overclocking my CPU and video card, but doing so gains me only an additional 1,000 points. What's going on?

— ROB CA

Something is definitely amiss. With a system as fast as yours, you should indeed be getting scores in the 40,000 range. Things to check: Did you install the software that came with your motherboard? Are you running ATI's latest drivers? Did you accidentally underclock your CPU and/or video card when first assembling your machine? Do you have anti-aliasing or anisotropic filtering turned on in your Advanced Display Properties? If you've checked all those items and everything seems tip-top, try a couple of other benchmarking apps (e.g., 3DMark2001 SE and 3DMark03 — www.futuremark.com) and see if your system fares any better. If it does, then perhaps AquaMark3 simply doesn't "like" your configuration for some reason, and that's probably not the end of the world. If not, you may have a serious hardware issue — contact the store you bought your parts from and see about swapping them out for new ones.

If you have a hardware question or comment, or just want some... thing, write to **Greg Vederman, Hard Stuff, PC Gamer, 150 North Hill Drive, Suite 40, Brisbane, CA 94005**, or email *greg@pcgamer.com*.

ABS® Recommends Microsoft® Windows® XP

ABS® Mayhem G2

Microsoft® Windows® XP Home SP1a
Intel® Centrino™ Mobile Technology
Intel® Pentium® M Processor 735
Intel® PRO/Wireless Network Connection 2200BG
Intel® 855PME
1024MB DDR333 SDRAM
ATI Mobility Radeon™ 9700 with 128MB Memory
15.4 WXGA 1280x800 TFT LCD
S-Video TV-Out
60GB/5400 rpm Hard Drive
Integrated DVD/CD-RW Combo Drive
3 in 1 SD/MMC/MS Card Reader
802.11g/b 54M Rate Wireless
10/100 Mbps Ethernet Controller & 56K V.90 Modem
1 Firewire port & 3 USB 2.0 Ports
Travel Weight: 6.4 lbs.

$1899

mobile *Performance*

Work. Play. Communicate. All without wires.

Get the performance you want, the battery life you demand and the integrated WLAN capability you need to play the latest multiplayer games online and to stay in touch with friends wherever you go. Get unwired today with a Mayhem G2 high-performance gaming notebook, powered by Intel® Centrino™ Mobile Technology.

ABS

www.abspc.com/pg09

Always Better Service

800.876.8088

- 1 Year Limited Parts Warranty
- 30 Days Money Back Guarantee
- Hours: Mon-Fri 8:30AM-5:30PM PST
- 24/7 Technical Support
- Lifetime Toll-Free Tech Support

Price, specification, and terms are subject to change without notice. Picture shown with upgraded options. ABS® is not responsible for errors in typography and/or photography. 30 days money back guarantee does not include opened software, parts, or special orders merchandise. Original shipping and handling fee along with return shipping charge are non-refundable. Products returned after 30 days or in a non-refundable condition are subject to a restocking fee. Intel, Intel Inside, and Pentium are trademarks or registered trademarks of Intel Corporation or its subsidiaries in the United States and other countries.

Extended PLAY

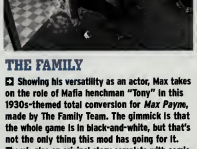
DAN MORRIS
EXTENDEDPLAY@PCGAMER.COM

09.04 MODS OF THE MONTH

Played a great mod? Email the address above!

REBALANCE MOD v. 3.40

Wandering aimlessly through the *Freelancer* galaxy can grow a bit dull once you've beaten the single-player story and pimped your ride with the best ship money can buy. Thankfully, Michael Dan's single- and multiplayer-compatible mod adds dozens of new ships from every sci-fi show, game, or movie you could think of (and many you couldn't), and gives Trent a stylish new outfit. (*www.rebalancemod.com*; requires Freelancer Mod Manager, available at Lancersreactor.com)



THE FAMILY

Showing his versatility as an actor, Max takes on the role of Mafia henchman "Tony" in this 1930s-themed total conversion for *Max Payne*, made by The Family Team. The gimmick is that the whole game is in black-and-white, but that's not the only thing this mod has going for it. There's also an original story complete with comic book-panel intermissions, cinematic in-engine cut-scenes and voiceovers, and new maps and models. (*http://3dap.com/maxpayne/thefamily*)

BUG HUNT

86

You'll never believe it's *UT 2004*! The new *Alien Swarm* mod offers top-down mayhem in a clever mix of action and strategy. Trade in the "tournament" for a sweat-inducing campaign through an alien-infested space station. (But not the *Doom* one.)

SOMETIMES THE PHRASE "total conversion" really does mean *total*. Example: *Alien Swarm*, made by Black Cat Games as a total conversion of *Unreal Tournament 2004*. While this new game definitely benefits from Epic's kickass engine, it's virtually unrecognizable as having anything to do with the *UT2K4* universe.

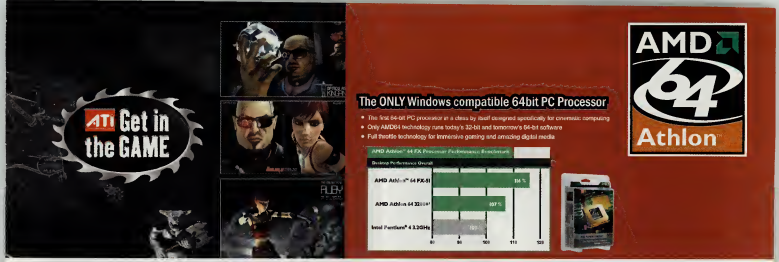
Instead, Black Cat has created a vision that hearkens back to *Xenophobia* and the ominous feel of the *Aliens* movies. *Alien Swarm* is played from a top-down perspective. You're a Space Marine in an alien-infested space station, packing a nice arsenal of weapons with which to lay waste to the infestation. You can play through a single-player campaign or join with up to seven buddies in a dynamite eight-player cooperative mode.

Let me just get the single-player props out of the way, so I can move on to the real joys. The campaign is full of plenty of OMG scares, as you pick your way through a massive nest of extra-terrestrial beasties.

But the real thrill of *Alien Swarm* is its multiplayer co-op mode. Whether you've got two players or eight, precious few games on the market will fill you and your buddies with such a sense of shared menace.

With aliens closing in from all sides, you and your homeboys circle up, back-to-back, weapons bristling outward. The anticipation becomes unbearable. You can't resist dropping lines from *Aliens*: "Game over, man! Game over!" (And then, when the aliens come charging, "Let's rockkkkk!")

MY GAMES OF THE MONTH: 1. DOOM 3 2. JOINT OPERATIONS 3. TOM CLANCY'S SPLINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMORROW 4. MVP BASEBALL 2004 5. SUPERPOWER 2 (BETA)



ZT recommends Microsoft® Windows® XP

ZT Gaming PC A5279

AMD Athlon™ 64 Processor 2800+ 1600FSB w/ HyperTransport

- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- VIA K8T800 Chipset Mainboard
- 256MB PC3200 DDR400
- Seagate® 80GB Serial ATA/150 7200rpm Hard Drive
- 7 in 1 Flash Media Reader
- 128MB ATI RADEON™ 9200SE w/ TV-Out
- 52X32X52 CD-RW & 16X DVD-ROM
- Integrated 6 Channel Audio
- 56K V.92 Fax Modem, 10/100/1000 Gigabit LAN
- MID Tower Chassis w/ 350watt Power Supply
- Logitech® Internet Keyboard & Optical Wheel Mouse
- Microsoft® Works 7.0
- 3 Years Limited Warranty

$699 Logitech® Z-340 3 Pieces Speaker w/Subwoofer (Add: $35)
NEC 17" Flat Panel LCD Display (Add: $419)

ZT Gaming PC A5280

AMD Athlon™ 64 Processor 3000+ 1600FSB w/ HyperTransport

- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- VIA K8T800 Chipset Mainboard
- 512MB PC3200 DDR400
- Seagate® 120GB Serial ATA/150 7200rpm Hard Drive
- 7 in 1 Flash Media Reader
- 128MB ATI RADEON™ 9600XT w/ TV-Out & DVI
- NEC 8X DVD±RW & CD-RW Combo Drive
- Integrated 6 Channel Audio
- U.S. Robotics 56K V.92 Fax Modem, 10/100 LAN
- X-MEN MID Tower Chassis w/320Watt Power Supply
- Logitech® Internet Keyboard & Optical Wheel Mouse
- Microsoft® Works 7.0
- 3 Years Limited Warranty

$949 Logitech® Z-640 6 Pieces Speaker w/Subwoofer (Add: $59)
NEC 17" Flat Panel LCD Display (Add: $419)

ZT Media Center PC A5281

AMD Athlon™ 64 Processor 3200+ 1600FSB w/ HyperTransport

- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- VIA K8T800 Chipset Mainboard
- 512MB PC3200 DDR400
- Seagate® 160GB Serial ATA/150 7200rpm Hard Drive
- 7 in 1 Media Reader & 1.44MB Floppy Combo Drive
- 256MB ATI RADEON™ X800 PRO w/ TV-Out & DVI
- NEC 8X DVD±RW & CD-RW Combo Drive
- Creative Labs Sound Blaster Audigy 2 ZS w/ Firewire
- U.S. Robotics 56K V.92 Fax Modem, 10/100 LAN
- Cooler Master MID ATX Tower Chassis w/450Watt Power Supply
- Logitech® Internet Keyboard & Optical Wheel Mouse
- Microsoft® Works 7.0
- 3 Years Limited Warranty

$1,499 Logitech® Z-5300 6 Pieces Speaker w/Subwoofer (Add: $149)
NEC 17" Flat Panel LCD Display (Add: $419)

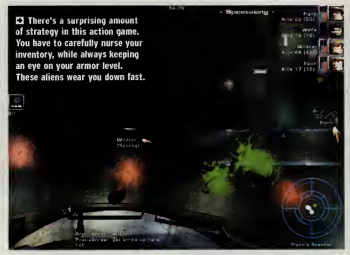
(984-7687)

866-ZTGROUP

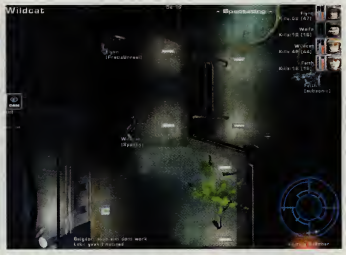
Http://www.ztgroup.com/go/pcg0904

Special Discount for Education, Government & Corporate
Call Our Experienced Account Managers for Custom Configurations. Available While Supplies Last.
Quality Assured • 3 Year Limited Warranty • Life Time Tech Support •

ZT GROUP



There's a surprising amount of strategy in this action game. You have to carefully nurse your inventory, while always keeping an eye on your armor level. These aliens wear you down fast.



Of course, in the heat of this kind of maelstrom, a quick picture can speak a thousand words, so the game makes available a bunch of simple emotes that quickly communicate info. It's more than a throwaway system — you'll quickly get into the swing of quick-key dialogue.

This is no arcade game: there's plenty of variety to keep things strategically interesting. For starters, you can play as one of four Marine classes: Special Weapons, Medic, Demolitions, and Technical. Each provides the benefits you'd expect; by divvying up the chores, you can spread out capabilities to cover explosives work, healing wounded teammates, bypassing security systems, and wielding the heavy heat-tracking guns. You can even use a handheld welder to cut through a sealed door — and then re-seal the door behind you, to keep out the enemy.

Your firepower is impressive. Along with the usual machineguns and shotguns, you get to play with flamethrowers, mines, and automated sentry guns. In the near-dark sections of the maps, you'll be wise to pop a flare. (Just be ready to recoil in horror from what the light unveils!) And, of course, you have a thermal scanner, which provides the requisite "They're right on top of us!" scares with its audible distance-pinging.

The mod contains numerous mission objectives, keeping things from falling into the "slay it all" trap. Sometimes you just have to clear a level, but more often you've got to escort someone, locate an item, or breach a secured zone. One thing you can always count on, though, is a horde of flesh-ripping jackals wherever you go.

Now for the truly horrifying bit: as with Aliens, these baddies are parasitic and love nothing more than to infect a Marine and hatch some evil inside his body. That's right, folks — be prepared to have your character become a chest-bursting casualty of alien larvae. That's fugged up!

Alien Swarm is one of those inspired total conversions that makes you laugh out loud in appreciation of a clever concept well-executed. Black Cat Games has crafted something special here.

GET IT at *http://www.blackcatgames.com/swarm*, or from this month's *PC Gamer* disc!

RED ORCHESTRA WINS "PHASE II"

IN JULY 2004'S EXTENDED PLAY COLUMN, we previewed *Red Orchestra*, an *Unreal Tournament 2004* mod set on the Eastern Front of World War II. We had plenty of praise for it, but we failed to forecast the ultimate honor — its winning Phase II of the "Make Something *Unreal*" million-dollar mod challenge.

But that's exactly the honor that *Red Orchestra* can now claim. This sizzling mod shot to the forefront of a crowded field of competition, staking out an automatic berth in the big-money final round.

With its grim-'n'-gritty re-creation of the bitter combat between German and Russian forces in the Soviet Union, *RO* is the most unexpected thing of all: an amateur creation that stands strong as a unique contribution to the WWII-shooter genre. In a market full of professional productions, this achievement speaks volumes about the level of the team behind it.

The applause didn't just stop at "Best FPS Mod," either. *RO* was also singled out for Best Voice/Audio Work — and deservedly so.

We're not surprised at all by *RO*'s success, but congratulations are due anyway. The Red Orchestra Team's labor of love was released in its award-winning new version on June 4, entirely enough, and is available at *http://redorchestramod.gameservers.net/index.html*. Do yourself a favor and check it out.

IONGamers and ATI present the

$5,000 CALL OF DUTY

Better Than Pot-Luck Tournament

September 13 - 19, 2004.
Register now @ www.iongamers.com

ION GAMERS.COM

Innovating competitive online gaming!

For the top PC shooter games, IONGamers features

* Cash prize toumaments
* Challenge based ladders for teams and individuals
* Easily configurable game servers for league matches, scrims or public play

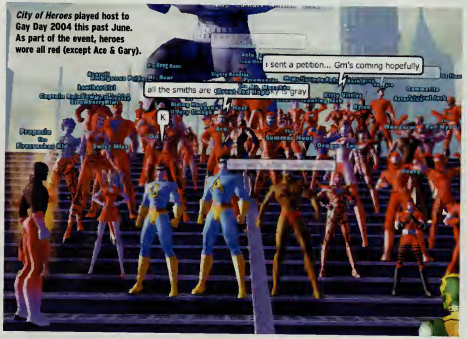
IONGamers: more games, more cash, more fun.

ATI Get in the GAME™ ACTIVISION HYPE PC GAMER

© 2003 Activision, Inc. Activision is registered trademark and Call of Duty is a trademark of Activision, Inc. All rights reserved.
Developed by Infinity Ward, Inc. This product contains software technology licensed from id Software, Inc. ("id Technology"). id Technology © 1999-2003 id Software, Inc. All rights reserved.
The ratings icon is a registered trademark of the Entertainment Software Association. All other trademarks and trade names are the properties of their respective owners.

CHUCK OSBORN KILLINGBOX@PCGAMER.COM

Killing Box



City of Heroes played host to Gay Day 2004 this past June. As part of the event, heroes wore all red (except Ace & Gary).

I'M A GAMER, TOO

There's a place for everyone in the gaming community

Ever tell a non-gamer that you play games? Unless you're a 14-year-old white guy, you may receive a quizzical expression conveying a mixture of pity and confusion, followed by "Really? But you're not a [insert stereotype]."

This reaction is exactly the sort of thing that stops aspiring gamers from joining the fun: Well-meaning pals (and moms) who think you're too old, too cool, too female, too religious, or too *something* to enjoy gaming. Luckily, a community that fits *your* needs is only a website away.

"Game chicks" should check out WomenGamers.com and GameGirlAdvance.com, sites that present gaming from a female perspective. Into action? No problem — hook up other Gyno-American fraggers at LadyGamers.com and QuakeWomen.com.

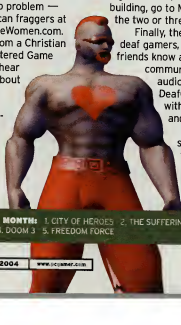
For news and reviews from a Christian worldview, go to Christ-Centered Game Reviews (*www.ccgr.org*), or hear Christian developers chat about their new projects at ChristianCoders.com. And Muslim gamers discuss matters of faith and *Far Cry* at the Muslim Gaming Community (*www.iamclan.com*).

Gay gamers (aka "gaymers") are also out in force. Gamers Experimentations (*http://gamers.experimentations.org*) offers visitors the ability to see what games other members are playing. Other good resources include Gaymer.org, where you can purchase gay-themed gamer shirts, and AllOutGames.com, which describes itself as "Hardcore...without the hate!" Likewise, African-American gamers who'd prefer less white bread lumped in with their gaming news should check out *www.aagamer.com*, a site that brings racial diversity to games coverage.

TheOlderGamers.com will make you feel right at home if you're over age 25. And if you're looking for a little, ah, romance in your community-building, go to MMODating.com and try to meet the two or three women brave enough to post.

Finally, there are resources for blind and deaf gamers, too. Let your visually impaired friends know about AudysseyMagazine.org, a community with a special emphasis on audio-only games. Conversely, DeafGamers.com evaluates games with a focus on visual feedback and the needs of the deaf.

Don't see your group represented here? It's probably out there...and if it isn't, start your own! Gaming is for everyone, so let me know about any sites that I may have missed.



5 MY GAMES OF THE MONTH: 1. CITY OF HEROES 2. THE SUFFERING 3. UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004 ALIEN SWARM MOD 4. DOOM 3 5. FREEDOM FORCE

Desktop General

WILLIAM R. TROTTER DESKTOPGENERAL@PCGAMER.COM

BROTHERS IN ARMS LOOKS LIKE A WINNER

I WAS RECENTLY INVITED by Ubisoft to give a no-holds-barred critique of its forthcoming blockbuster wargame *Brothers in Arms*, which re-creates the chaotic night-drop that opened D-Day, and then chronicles the first week of the Normandy Campaign.

While I'm always eager to sneak-preview a headline title, I didn't take my seat with any great anticipation. After writing the strategy guide for *Close Combat* (a project that probably shortened my life by five years), I'd developed an allergy to *any* game that required me to push Shermans through the hedgerows of Normandy.

Two minutes after the demo scenario started rolling, I was sitting bolt-upright in my chair, mouth agape, seized afresh by the drama of the airborne invasion, blinking in amazement at the quality of the graphics, the breath-of-fresh-air simplicity of the interface, and the seemingly flawless behavior of the AI-controlled soldiers and vehicles.

As a platoon leader, your command-and-control functions couldn't be easier; just designate a squad or fireteam, click on the place where you want them to deploy, then duck behind a mound to escape the evil hiss of MG-42 tracers. The designated troops will try everything they've been trained to do to reach the position you want them in, and once they're *there*, they'll defend, suppress, or counter-attack as circumstances dictate.

Judging from the slice of the game that I saw, a title has finally emerged that seamlessly blends the adrenalized rush of a terrific shooter with the tactical realism of a historical strategy game.

By god, this game *looked* like the real Normandy, and the menacing atmosphere *felt* like the real Normandy. The squads on both sides have been uncannily well-programmed to follow the standard tactical doctrines of their respective armies. If the Americans' defensive perimeter had the tiniest opening and the Krauts had even one MG to lay down suppressive fire, the

Brothers in Arms

Wehrmacht soldiers tried to execute a slashing flank attack every time it wasn't suicidal. And if it was suicidal, the AI soldaten improvised something else intelligently.

I even began to imagine that I could tell, just by observing their confidence, which Germans were raw young recruits and which were war-hardened non-coms. Indeed, one of the programmers affirmed that the personalities assigned to the AI-controlled soldiers were carefully gauged to convey just that impression.

Such painstaking realism was a wonder to behold!

Spike PRESENTS
GameRiot
Powered By XBOX
Halo • Jade Empire • ESPN NFL 2005 • Sudeki • Kameo: Elements of Power • Soul Calibur II
Mech Assault • Lone Wolf • Conker: Live and Reloaded • Chronicles of Riddick
ESPN NBA 20 sure Suit Larry • Red Ninja: E Honor • Rallisport Challenge
America's Forces • Tribes: Vengeanc alor • ESPN MLB Baseball
Unreal Tou Painkiller • Sudeki • tes! • NVIDIA Gaming Zone
Harry P oner of Azka oods PGA Tour 2004 • Sudeki
Chronicles Jade Empire g Car Challenge • Worms 3D
Tony Hawk' Und ground • Halo • Jade E N MLB Base PN NFL 2005
Jade Empire • Sudeki • Kameo: Elements of ech Assault 2 Painkiller
Conker: Live and Reloaded • Worms ronicles of Ri BA 2005
Red Ninja: End of Honor • America's Forces
Tribes: Vengeance • Men of Va ament 200 's Pirates!
NVIDIA Gaming Zone • Harry Potter of Azkaban • Ch of Riddick
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004 • Toca 2 Tourn Challenge • Tony Hawk's Underground
Halo • Baseball PN NFL 2005 • Sudeki • Jade Empi
Kameo: Elements of Power • Mech Assault Lone Wolf • Conker: Live and Rel
Painkiller • Worms 3D 2005 • Leisure S
FREE GEAR!
HOT PRIZES!
ALL YOU CAN EAT
VIDEO GAMES
70 PLASMA AND LCDs!
COMPETE ON STAGE!
THE GAMERIOT GIRLS!
THE WORLD'S LARGEST TRAVELING VIDEO GAME PARTY
Play 38 new and UNRELEASED titles
BLOCKBUSTER Halo Championship with cash prize
Check out tour dates and titles at WWW.GAMERIOT.COM
XBOX
NVIDIA
BLOCKBUSTER
AMD
Mountain Dew
AMERICA'S ARMY
ESPN VIDEOGAMES
VIVENDI UNIVERSAL
DC
GAMESPOT
future games
©2004 Games Media Properties LLC.
Hands off our artwork, punks.

DESSLOCK ALTERNATELIVES@PCGAMER.COM

Alternative Lives

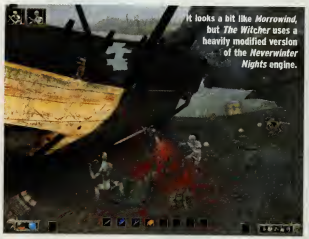
BEYOND THE DARKNESS

Bright beacons abound for the RPG genre

IT'S HARD TO DENY that some disappointing trends are affecting the role-playing genre. The MMORPG market seems oversaturated. Too few traditional RPGs from major publishers are in development — and some of the games-in-progress have discouraging production timetables and budgets.

All is far from lost, however. Thanks to a recent spate of announcements and unveilings, RPG fans can look forward to new games from the creators of the *Ultima* series, *Wizardry V–VII*, *Planescape Torment*, and *Baldur's Gate*.

Among the good omens:



It looks a bit like *Morrowind*, but *The Witcher* uses a heavily modified version of the *Neverwinter Nights* engine.

HAPPY CONFIRMATION
BIOWARE RECENTLY announced its long-rumored new PC-only RPG, *Dragon Age* (*www.bioware.com*), which aims to combine the best elements of *Baldur's Gate* and *Knights of the Old Republic*, and has the same lead designer as those classics. It'll feature party-based gameplay, a variable camera perspective, and epic-scale battles in its original fantasy world.

WELCOME BACK
THE VETERAN BLACK ISLE developers that formed Obsidian Entertainment are working on *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic II*. An aggressive production timetable makes major engine improvements unlikely, but expect a more morally ambiguous storyline from the creators of the extremely well-written *Planescape Torment*. (See feature story on page 52.)

ANOTHER COMEBACK
D.W. BRADLEY RECENTLY unveiled *Dungeon Lords* (*www.dreamcatchergames.com*), a surprisingly action-oriented RPG from the veteran designer of three of the best and most hardcore *Wizardrys*. His last RPG, *Wizards & Warriors*, survived several publisher changes but was ultimately disappointing, so it's good to see that he has a new, stronger project in the works. (See hands-on on page 25.)

EUROPEAN GOODNESS
JOWOOD WILL PUBLISH AN English version of *Gothic II Gold*, including the previously unavailable expansion pack, although North American distribution is still in doubt. Recently, Polish developer CD Projekt showed me *The Witcher* (*www.thewitcher.com*), an original action-oriented RPG using an impressively modified *Neverwinter Nights* engine, and it's looking tasty.

ONLINE NOVELTY
NCSOFT (*WWW.NCSOFT.NET*) has been demonstrating some refreshingly novel online-RPG designs, including *City of Heroes*, *Tabula Rasa*, and the *Car Wars*-inspired *Auto Assault*.

THE MISSING
MIDDLE-EARTH ONLINE AND *Ultima X: Odyssey* were conspicuously absent from E3 this year, raising suspicions that these titles are farther off than expected. And Bethesda still hasn't revealed *Elder Scrolls 4*, although it's well into development.

BIG 2004 RELEASES

Troika has had past problems implementing its ambitious designs, and *Vampire the Masquerade: Bloodlines* (*www.vampirebloodlines.com*) is its first 3D game, but I love Troika's RPG designs. *Bloodlines* (shown at left) emphasizes shooter elements more than I'd like, but the game is easily the most exciting RPG on the horizon. *Dungeon Siege II* (*www.gaspowered.com*) is another contender, but I'm still waiting to be convinced on that one.

5 MY GAMES OF THE MONTH: 1. BEYOND DIVINITY 2. FAR CRY 3. BATTLEFIELD VIETNAM 4. SACRED 5. COMBAT MISSION: AFRIKA KORPS

Sim Column

ANDY MAHOOD SIMCOLUMN@PCGAMER.COM

Expect the high-fidelity driving physics in *GPL's 1965* mod in Papy's new work.

PAPYRUS TEAM READY FOR NEW VENTURE

BEFORE WE GET too weepy-eyed over Vivendi Universal Games' decision to close down its Papyrus Racing Games subsidiary, we should all take comfort at how the development team that earned *PC Gamer*'s Racing Game of the Year award for *three years running* responded to those pink slips. They grabbed the wheel and took over the driving chores themselves!

An official press release wasn't ready at press time, but I can now report that Papyrus co-founder Dave Kaemmer (shown at left) teamed with Boston Red Sox owner John W. Henry in late May to buy back all of Papyrus' critical source code (graphics, physics, multi-user, AI) from VU Games. This monumentally significant deal should ensure an uninterrupted flow of high-end driving sims from the Massachusetts-based developer for years to come — under whatever new moniker they choose to operate.

"The simulations we were making at Papyrus are being sold in the wrong market," reflects Kaemmer, who believes marketing high-fidelity racing sims like *NASCAR 2003* through conventional retail channels is tantamount to "selling downhill skis at Toys 'R' Us."

So what can we expect from the new venture?

"We have some pretty exciting plans in mind," states former Papyrus producer Steve Myers. "[And] I hope to have a nice core group of guys from Papy joining me." What makes this deal especially exciting is that the new developer no longer has to answer to corporate "suits," or worse, dumb down its simulations to appeal to the fast-twitch gamepad crowd.

"Our service will eventually cover many different types of racing, starting with street cars or Formula Fords and eventually moving up to the championship level, on road courses, ovals, and even off-road/rally driving," says Kaemmer. "We'll use a generic PC-based simulation engine, with modular components."

As evidenced by their decade-and-a-half of critically acclaimed race-sim products, these guys are experts at what they do, and PC racing fans should be in for a major treat once the team gets up to speed.

Just don't expect to see Kaemmer and company's latest title at your local Wal-Mart or Toys "R" Us when it's ready for launch in 18 to 24 months. This one won't be for the kiddies.

EB GAMES™
electronics boutique®

Available in stores August 4th!

Call 1-800-800-5166
for the store nearest you
or visit us at www.ebgames.com

©2003 id Software, Inc. All rights reserved. Doom and id are registered trademarks of id Software, Inc.

EB GAMES electronics boutique

We take games seriously™

ACTIVISION

CITY OF HEROES

Here's a special treat for *COH* fans: an exclusive guide to the new game update, "Through the Looking Glass," straight from Cryptic Studios! Whether you're a high-level player ready to try the new content or a newbie wondering what lies ahead, goodness awaits!

At the Rikti Crash Site, you'll see military NPCs fighting Rikti soldiers. These "battles" are purely for effect — the sides won't damage each other — but they're fun to watch.

THE NEW ZONES AND THEIR BACKSTORY

The title of *City of Heroes*' first update, "Through the Looking Glass," refers to a top-secret project in the bowels of Portal Corporation. The company has been a pioneer in extra-dimensional research, a field that led to the discovery of teleportation technology. Shortly after the Rikti War, the Portal Corporation invented the MedCom patch, allowing heroes to teleport instantly to hospitals when badly injured. The devices are still in the testing phase and not yet in mass production.

Portal Corporation has its headquarters on **Peregrine Island**, just off the coast of Paragon City. The entire island is devoted to the company and its employees. The only outsiders allowed on Peregrine Island are somehow related to the many businesses needed to keep Portal Corporation operating smoothly.

Under the auspices of Project: Looking Glass, some heroes have begun traveling to other dimensions. From strange new villains to a world wreathed in shadow, they've found more than enough in these alternate realities to command their attention.

Portal Corporation's technology is in great demand. Crey's covert teams scour the island and Nemesis' troops have proven impossible to evict. Even the Rikti are in on the action. No one knows why the aliens are so interested in Project: Looking Glass, but it's clear that the city's most powerful heroes are needed to defend Peregrine Island. (Heroes of any level can venture to this new area, but players really can't handle its encounters until they're level 40.)

The small islands surrounding Peregrine once housed research facilities of their own, but these have long since been abandoned. Now, strange creatures run amok on these deserted patches of earth. Rikti beasts, once held for experimentation, run wild on the Peregrine Keys, and reports have the Devouring Earth hastening the destruction of the decrepit buildings.

In addition to Peregrine Island, the latest update introduces players to the **Rikti Crash Site**. (Players must be at least level 40 to gain access to this area.) This once-peaceful neighborhood has been transformed into a brutal war zone. At one end lies the wreckage of an immense Rikti warship. Earth's authorities believe the technology within could well be a doomsday weapon. As a result, the military is reluctant to approach the ship for fear of retaliation. Nevertheless, the Army has had some success in restricting the Rikti forces to this zone. Players will be sent into this area to help the military deal with this ongoing problem.

ALL-NEW MISSION INTERACTIVITY

"Through the Looking Glass" also gives some mission sets new interactive features. For instance, both the **caverns of Oranbega** and the **lairs of the 5th Column** sometimes sport prisons. Players defeated on these maps reappear in either a Spartan cell in 5th Column bases or an entrapment crystal in Oranbega. Heroes must escape by blasting through a thick door, and they must be exceptionally careful about avoiding the guards.

Remember that the Circle of Thorns and the 5th Column guard these prisons with enough forces to repel the team's entire complement. A single hero, cut off from his teammates, will need to use guile and stealth to rejoin his friends. Players will find that the Concealment power set is extremely useful in avoiding detection by the guards, but that Teleportation is equally useful in retrieving a lost teammate. For heroes who lack these powers, there are still paths out of the room that bypass the room's guards.

Oranbega also reveals the might of its **magical Orichalcum crystals**, which are embedded in the walls, floors, and ceilings throughout the caverns. Each type of crystal has a different effect on heroes. The red stones cause damage in a good size radius around them. The blue stones allow heroes to recover Endurance at an increased rate. And the green stones boost Hit Point regen-

eration. Heroes must remember that villains are immune to the damaging effects, but not the healing ones. The Circle of Thorns, however, tend to avoid the crimson Orichalcum because the crystals' power taxes their magical-protection wards.

Players must also be on guard for the **Demon Gates** that dot the lost city of Oranbega. When heroes approach, a gate activates and begin summoning beasts from the netherworld. Despite the immediate threat posed by the creatures, heroes must focus their efforts on destroying the gate. Otherwise, the flow of demonic reinforcements won't stop. The key is to target the gateway's energy vortex: if it's damaged enough, the gate will collapse. Then the heroes can turn their attention to the demons that have already been summoned!

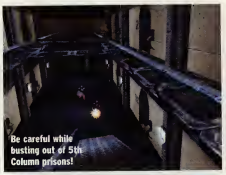
The 5th Column and Oranbega mission sets aren't the only ones to receive new features. The **Tech missions** also have a brand-new room: the labs. Heroes will find scientists hard at work on their latest experiments in state-of-the-art, vacuum-sealed rooms. If players destroy the equipment in these labs, they'll receive a random buff or debuff to a characteristic: Hit Point regeneration rate, Endurance recovery rate, Speed, Damage, Accuracy, and so on. Because of the random effects, players should attack the laboratory equipment only in the most dire circumstances. That said, it's a terrific "last gap" tactic that might help the heroes overcome the odds. The laboratory experiments affect friend and foe alike, so even if the result harms the heroes, the villains will also be the worse for wear.

WARNING: POWERFUL NEW VILLAIN GROUPS

"Through the Looking Glass" introduces three new villain groups to Paragon City: the mysterious Malta Group, the macabre Carnival of Shadows, and the powerful Praetorians.

The **Malta Group** is a shadowy military organization devoted to the control of Earth's superhumans by any means necessary. Their most obvious weapons are the Titan robots, which come in three classes: Hercules, Zeus, and Kronos. The "smallest" class, the Hercules Titans, are 12 feet tall and armored with the latest weaponry. They are almost, but not quite, as strong as a single player hero. Hercules Titans fire off a number of different missile types that do damage in a relatively large area of effect. Heroes battling these mechanical juggernauts should spread out to keep their casualties to a minimum.

But what makes the Hercules Titans especially deadly is their ability to combine to form the larger, more powerful Zeus-class Titans. When one Hercules robot reaches a dangerously low Hit Point total, it'll search out another Hercules to combine with. Players must stop this process: a Zeus-class Titan is stronger than both Hercules Titans combined. A good strategy is to keep each



Be careful while busting out of 5th Column prisons!

Hercules Titan as far as possible from the others. Another tactic is for heroes to concentrate their attacks on a single Hercules Titan to destroy it as quickly as possible. Luckily for the heroes, the Titans require an enormous amount of resources to produce, so the Malta Group tends not to use more than two or three in any given squad.

The Kronos Titan is a 50-foot-tall version of the Zeus Titan, and fully capable of taking on a full team of Paragon City's most powerful heroes. If heroes believe they are about to take on the Kronos Titan, they should approach with extreme caution.

The Malta Group employs in its ranks a seemingly ineffectual operative: the Sapper. Though his weapon does no damage and has no lingering effects whatsoever, heroes should dread Sappers as much as Titans, because the Sapper Gun drains heroes'

In the time-honored tradition of twisted alternate realities, the Praetorians are evil versions of Paragon City's classic heroes. It'll be creepy trying to beat down doppelgangers of Ms. Liberty, Bastion, and crew.

Make sure you have plenty of Inspirations before you take on a Ring Mistress.

Endurance. Players must identify Sappers in squads and defeat them immediately. A Sapper can render almost any hero powerless with a few well-placed shots from his Sapper Gun. Even worse, Sapper Guns possess a special "overload" feature that allows a soldier to shoot a draining explosion blast. As with fighting Titan robots, players should spread out to prevent this attack from hitting more than one hero at once.

Unlike the technologically powerful Malta Group, the **Carnival of Shadows** eschews modern arms and prefers arcane weaponry. The first thing that all heroes should know is that anyone fully initiated into the Carnival of Shadows earns a magical mask. Every member is thus inherently resistant to psychic assaults; however, their preference for elegant dress leaves the Carnival quite vulnerable to lethal attacks. When one of these villains is defeated, his mask releases an unholy supernatural energy that drains a hero's Endurance. Heroes should quickly step back from any Carnival member after delivering the final blow. Ranged attacks are often the best way to deliver the coup de grace to a Carnival villain.

The dreaded Ring Mistresses are the true force behind the Carnival of Shadows. Each one possesses formidable abilities that can freeze a hero in his tracks. A Ring Mistress possesses the mighty Subdue power, which can prevent a player from moving (disastrous for a Tanker or Scrapper). The more powerful Dark Ring Mistress uses the Petrify power to hold a hero and prevent him from doing anything. Players should be on guard against these abilities and stock up on plenty of Discipline, Strength of Will, or Iron Will Inspirations before engaging these enemies. At the very least, Defenders and Controllers should prep the party with plenty of Immobilization and Hold resistance buffs before any Carnival of Shadows encounter.

The **Praetorians** are extra-dimensional versions of Paragon City's most famous heroes — except that on their world, evil is good and good is evil. Since Portal Corporation opened an entrance into their reality, these despotic villains have turned their eyes to this world and its fertile resources. And because most of our planet's heroes died in the Rikti War, the Praetorians feel that this planet is ripe for the taking.

Heroes should face a Praetorian with extreme caution: each one is an Archvillain capable of taking on a half-dozen heroes at once. Even worse, each Praetorian has his own set of lieutenants and minions to command.

MISSION COLOSSAL: THE SEWER TRIAL

[Note: You must be at least level-38 to do the new Sewer Trial mission.] The alien Rikti, for reasons unknown, have grown a huge creature in the depths of Paragon City's sewers. This beast, dubbed the **Hydra** for its numerous tentacles, spawned the Kraken that terrorizes Perez Park. Heroes must enter the sewers and battle the Hydra to prevent it from growing to encompass the entire sewer system.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 102

Buying a Video Game?

Play the game that's right for you!

You can give Tiger Woods a tennis racket, but he knows that golf is the game that's right for him. So how does Tiger know which computer and video games are OK to play? He checks the rating on every game box...And so should you!

Computer and video game ratings have two parts: **rating symbols**, which tell you what age group the game is appropriate for and **content descriptors**, which tell you about specific content elements that may be of interest or concern.

So the next time you're choosing a game, check the rating and the content descriptors. And like Tiger Woods, play the game that's right for you.

ESRB

ENTERTAINMENT SOFTWARE RATING BOARD

www.esrb.org

CHECK THE RATINGS ON EVERY VIDEO GAME BOX

ON FRONT

ON BACK

FULL SAIL
Real World Education

Game Design & Development
Bachelor of Science
Degree Program

Associate of Science
Bachelor of Science
Degree Programs

school of

- Computer Animation
- Digital Media
- Entertainment Business
- Film
- Game Design & Development
- Recording Arts
- Show Production & Touring

800.226.7625
fullsail.com

If you're serious about your dream, we'll take your dream seriously.

3300 University Boulevard
Winter Park, FL 32792

Financial aid available to those who qualify • Job placement assistance
Accredited College, ACCSCT

© 2004 Full Sail, Inc. All rights reserved. The terms "Full Sail," "If you're serious about your dream, we'll take your dream seriously," "Full Sail Real World Education," and the Full Sail logo are either registered service marks or service marks of Full Sail, Inc.

Looking to save on PC GAMES?
Look no further....Go to where gamers go!
GoGamer.com
Savings ◄····· GREAT ·····► Selection
Visit us @ www.gogamer.com

CITY OF HEROES

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 100

If at all possible, don't let two Hercules Titans form a more powerful Zeus Titan (shown)!

First, heroes must find the code that will enable them to bypass the Rikti defenses and enter the chamber of the Hydra itself. After players scavenge the code from Rikti soldiers, they must fight their way into the center of the sewer system. Players should be especially on guard for the **Rikti Guardians**, whose battle suits endow them with several buffing powers. A Guardian can not only boost his comrades' attack rate, but also surround other Rikti soldiers in a forcefield that protects them from all types of damage (except for psionic). Players should eliminate the Guardians first, before tackling other Rikti targets.

The Sewer Trial itself takes several hours to accomplish, so plan accordingly (e.g., sell extra Enhancements and stock up on Inspirations before beginning the mission). Once you reach the Hydra's den, you'll face not just the huge Hydra, but also its progeny and many Rikti handlers. The Hydra is surrounded by its innumerable tentacles; much like the Hydra of myth, these divide into two when attacked. You'll find that special Rikti weapons gathered on your way to the chamber prevent the constant duplication of the tentacles.

The Hydra is also contained by a **Rikti forcefield**; ingenious players need to find a way to shut down the forcefield generators so they can reach the Hydra inside. And even then, the Hydra is virtually invulnerable to all sorts of damage — you'll need to search the chamber to find the secret of the Hydra's vulnerability. Should you manage to defeat the creature, you'll receive a special Trial Enhancement that provides a boost better than even a Single-Origin Enhancement.

Important note: Defeated heroes teleport into hospitals all the way back in the city. If this happens, a hero must fight his way back down the sewers and reach the Hydra den by himself. So it's absolutely vital that players carry several Awaken, Bounce Back, or Restoration Inspirations — or have in their group several Defenders or Controllers with Restoration abilities. This Trial is challenging, and even the best players may fall once or twice. Don't find yourself unprepared!

ADVERTISER INDEX

COMPANY	PRODUCT	PAGE #
20th Century Fox	Alien vs. Predator	45
ABS PC	ABS	89
Academy of Art College	Academy of Art	103
Activision	Doom 3	IFC-1
Aerosoft Corp.	ATC Simulator 2	99
Alienware Corp.	Alienware PC Systems	10-11
Atari	Locomotion	IBC
Best Buy, Inc.	Best Buy	23
CDV	Codename: Panzers	26-27
CompuExpert	Go Gamer	102
Cyberpower	Cyberpower	73-75
Electronic Arts	The Sims 2	18-19
Electronic Arts	Armies of Exigo	28-29
Electronics Boutique	Rome: Total War	7
Electronics Boutique	Codename: Panzers	51
Electronics Boutique	Call of Duty	67
Electronics Boutique	Doom 3	97
Falcon Northwest	Falcon NW PC Systems	57
Falcon Safety Products	Falcon Dust-Off	49
Full Sail Real-World Education	Full Sail Real-World Education	102
Game Riot	Game Riot	95
Hypersonic PC Systems	Hypersonic PC Systems	B7
ibuypower Computer	ibuypower	B0-B3
Iongamers	Iongamers	93
MSI Computers	MSI Computers	69
NC Interactive	City of Heroes	OBC
Newegg.com	Newegg	71
ProStar Computer	ProStar Computers	77
Sega of America	The Matrix Online	40-41, 43
Sony Online Entertainment	EverQuest EP 9	9
Sony Online Entertainment	EverQuest II	4-5
THQ	Warhammer 40K: Dawn of War	36-37
University of Advancing Technology	UAT	63
Vicious PC	Vicious PC	B5
Vivendi Publishing Group	Ground Control II	21
Wal-Mart	Wal-Mart	15
Wizards of the Coast	Magic TCG: 5th Dawn	13
ZT Group	ZT Group	91

CONTEST RULES No purchase is necessary. Only one entry per household, per month, will be counted. Anyone can enter, but only U.S. residents are eligible to win prizes, and the offer is void in FL, RI, Puerto Rico, and where prohibited by law. Your chances of winning depend on the number of entries we receive. Failure to follow the rules will result in instant disqualification. Canadian law prohibits those readers from entering.

Future Network USA is not responsible for typographical errors found in the Advertiser Index.

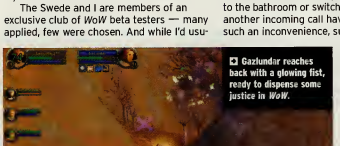
Gary Whitta

A HARD'S DAYS KNIGHT

Be warned: *World of Warcraft* is going to do for your social life what Krispy Kreme did for your ass

My buddy, whom I shall refer to only as "The Swede," (not to be confused with my roommate, TheVede), is currently unemployed. I am, as my former *PC Gamer* colleagues will no doubt attest, unemployable. And so it is that we both have a lot of free time on our hands. And so it is that the *World of Warcraft* beta has entered both our lives, and proceeded to lay waste to them both.

The Swede and I are members of an exclusive club of *WoW* beta testers — many applied, few were chosen. And while I'd usually be taking this opportunity to gloat over you unwashed masses who weren't fortunate enough to be selected, in fact I'm here to tell you how lucky you are: at least you're not watching your life disappear into a bottomless time-sink the way I currently am.



Gazlundar reaches back with a glowing fist, ready to dispense some justice in *WoW*.

When I first showed up in *WoW*, I had no idea what I was doing. Fortunately, The Swede was on-hand with his Level 39 Gnome Warlock (which looks a little like a Smurf, but is able to smite monsters with dazzling displays of dark Smurfing — er, magic) to guide me around the world and show me the ropes. Unfortunately, what I had planned as a short visit turned into something altogether more terrifying: Like Colonel Kurtz, I've gone up the river, and I'm not coming back. I've gone native; Azeroth is my new home.

The Swede and I are averaging 6 to 11 hours *per day*. With the help of some speakerphones and an unlimited-long-distance phone plan, we have a permanent voice connection as we dash around bashing Orcs and learning how to make Goretusk Liver Pie. Simple tasks like going to the bathroom or switching over to answer another incoming call have never been such an inconvenience, such is the all-consuming allure of this damn game.

Problem is, while both The Swede and I — in theory — have bugger-all to do all day, you don't realize just how much you *do* have to do, employed or not, until you're no longer doing any of it. Suddenly, the laundry is piling up; the bills aren't being opened, much less paid; and as I was recently reminded by Vede, your deadlines aren't being met. *[Goretusk Liver Pie-eating scum! — Ed. Vede]* But hey, at least I'm not married: poor Swede lives every day on a knife's edge, knowing that as his wife nears 6 p.m., every approaching car could be the wife coming home from work, demanding that he turn the hated thing off. The great self-fulfilling prophecy of a game like *WoW*, of course, is that if you're not already married, it's unlikely ever to become a problem.

Anyway, must dash — the phone's ringing and the caller ID tells me it's The Swede ready to embark on another marathon session. More on this next month...if I'm back in time. Don't wait up.

NEXT MONTH 10.04

This year marks the 30th anniversary of *Dungeons & Dragons*, the roleplaying game that made many of us gamers in the first place. To celebrate, we've scored exclusive first looks at **NEVERWINTER NIGHTS 2**, **D&D ONLINE**, the **D&D RTS**, and **BALDUR'S GATE 3**. Needless to say, this is the only place you'll find previews of these highly anticipated *D&D* games — plus an in-depth retrospective of *D&D* on the PC. Also, don't miss our round-up of the next big shooters, and our **WARHAMMER: DAWN OF WAR** hands-on!

PC GAMER

SEPTEMBER 2004 VOLUME 11, NUMBER 9

EDITORIAL
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF **Dan Morris**
MANAGING EDITOR **Corey Cohen**
EXECUTIVE EDITOR **Greg Vederman**
SENIOR EDITOR, FEATURES/PREVIEWS **Chuck Osborn**
SENIOR EDITOR, REVIEWS/NEWS **William Herms**
ASSISTANT EDITOR **D.J. Stapleton**
SENIOR WRITER **William R. Trotter**
EDITORIAL INTERNS **Norman Chen, J.T. Trollman**
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS **DesMick, Steve Klett, Andy Mehood, Matthew Peckham, Stephen Poole, Rob Smith, Gery Whitte**

ART
ART DIRECTOR **Joe Mitch**
ASSISTANT ART DIRECTOR **Chieki Hachisu**
PHOTOGRAPHER **Mark Medeo**
ASSOCIATE PHOTOGRAPHER **Samanthe Berg**

ADVERTISING
PUBLISHER **Andy Swenson**
REGIONAL SALES DIRECTOR **Michelle Torrey**
ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE **Shewne Rogers**
REGIONAL SALES DIRECTOR **Dru Montgomery**
ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE **Holly Neel**
CUSTOM PUBLISHING DIRECTOR **Stecy Bremmer**
CONSUMER SALES DIRECTOR **Eric Merkow**
CONSUMER SALES/MARKETING MGR. **Anika Cunningham**
AD SERVICES MANAGER **Cerrie Michaelson**

PRODUCTION
PRODUCTION COORDINATOR **Larry Briseno**

CIRCULATION
CIRCULATION DIRECTOR **Kate Bailey**
NEWSSTAND DIRECTOR **Mimi Hall**
FULFILLMENT MANAGER **Angi Martinez**
DIRECT MARKETING SPECIALIST **Robin Connell**
DIRECT MAIL MANAGER **Stephenie Bieke**

THE FUTURE NETWORK USA
150 North Hill Drive, Suite 40
Brisbane, CA 94005
(415) 468-4684
www.futurenetworkusa.com

PRESIDENT **Jonethen Simpson-Bint**
VP/CFO **Tom Valentino**
VP/GENERAL COUNSEL **Cherles Schuq**
VP/CIRCULATION **Holly Klinge!**
PUBLISHING DIRECTOR (GAMES) **Simon Whitcombe**
PUBLISHING DIRECTOR (TECHNOLOGY) **Chris Coelho**
EDITORIAL DIRECTOR (TECHNOLOGY) **Jon Phillips**
EDITORIAL DIRECTOR (MUSIC) **Bred Tolinski**
DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL SERVICES **Nancy Durlester**
PRODUCTION DIRECTOR **Richie Lesovoy**

FUTURE NETWORK USA IS PART OF THE FUTURE NETWORK PLC

THE FUTURE NETWORK PLC
30 Monmouth St., Bath, Avon, BA1 2BW, England
www.thefuturenetwork.plc.uk

NON-EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN **Roger Parry**
CHIEF EXECUTIVE **Greg Ingham**
GROUP FINANCE DIRECTOR **John Bowmen**

The Future Network plc serves the information needs of groups of people who share a passion. We aim to satisfy their passion by creating magazines and websites that offer superb value for money, trustworthy information, multiple ways to save time and money, and are a pleasure to read or visit. This simple strategy has helped create one of the fastest-growing media companies in the world: we publish more than 100 magazines, 20 magazine websites, and a number of web networks from offices in five countries. The company also licenses 42 magazines in 30 countries. The Future Network is a public company quoted on the London Stock Exchange (symbol: FNCT).

Audit Bureau of Circulations

ESRB

Let's assume for a second that Yetis exist. What would they eat? I mean, we always see pictures of them wandering around on the slope of some snow-covered mountain, with nary a shrub or tasty mountain goat in sight. Do they somehow gain sustenance from yellow snow left behind by mountain climbers? Or do they have a secret system of caves somewhere within the mountain itself, a secret paradise along the lines of Shangri-La where they can frolic and play without fear? I'm guessing it's Shangri-La, where all the Yeti kick back and suck down tasty mountain-goat burgers while watching women's basketball on MTV. How, that's the life. In fact, I'm putting on my snowshoes and getting the hell out of here. I will find the Yeti Shangri-La!

GOD CREATED
THE EARTH IN 7 DAYS

ATARI

NOW

YOU CAN PAVE IT IN AN AFTERNOON

PC CD ROM

Chris Sawyer

Welcome to Chris Sawyer's Locomotion, from the man who brought you Roller Coaster Tycoon. Now you can construct the ultimate combination of trains, trucks, ships, aircraft and more. So people get around, goods get hauled, industries develop and cities sprout up all around. Let's lay some asphalt!

EVERYONE E Mild Violence ESRB

POWERED BY gamespy

CHRIS SAWYER'S LOCOMOTION

GameSpy and the "Powered by GameSpy" design are trademarks of GameSpy Industries, Inc. All Rights Reserved. © 2004 Chris Sawyer. All Rights Reserved. © 2004 Atari Interactive, Inc. All Rights Reserved. All trademarks are the property of their respective owners.

THE HOT NEW ADDRESS FOR ONLINE ACTION

PlayNC

WWW.PLAYNC.COM

CITY OF HEROES

auto assault

LINEAGE II THE CHAOTIC CHRONICLE

TABULA RASA

GUILD WARS